■ Entertainment
A river runs thru Cesar's dream movie as actor, producer, director

■ Across / A17
Camarines folk to get 10,000 food coupons this month

■ World / A10
US Marines say they have 70% of Fallujah

■ News / A2
AFP intelligence chief's appointment recalled due to officers' opposition

■ Lifestyle
Go beauty bar-hopping with expert for latest tips, must-haves

What bonus! Gov't workers gripe

By Norman Bordadora

WHAT bonus?

"In fact, what we will receive is the remaining 60 percent of our yearend bonus and the P5,000 cash gift. We had already received half of it in May."

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Friday, November 12, 2004 ▲ 36 pages / vol. 19 / no. 338

website: www.inq7.net

Missing Mt. Halcon mountaineer found dead

By Madonna T. Virola
PIDE Southern Luzon Bureau

SAN JOSE, Or. Mindoro—Rescuers have found the decomposing body of a woman mountaineer who had been reported missing 13 days ago while trying to catch up with fellow climbers on Mount Halcon in Oriental Mindoro.

₱1-B lobby for 'sin' taxes

Outrageous, says Palace; solon told to show proof

By Cynthia Palafox
Christine O. Avendaño
and Juliet Labog-Javellana

AT LEAST P1 billion in lobby money may have flowed into the House of Representatives to water down the measure seeking higher taxes on tobacco and alcohol products, the vice chair of the House ways and means committee said yesterday.

Rep. Herminio Teves (Lakas, Negros Oriental) stopped short of unequivocally saying that his colleagues had received money but said that tobacco magnate Lucio Tan and his Fortune Tobacco Corp. would save a lot from House Bill No. 3374. The House of Representatives approved the bill on Oct. 26.

"It is watered down," Teves said of HB 3374, which slapped a 20-percent increase in taxes for all cigarette and alcohol brands for the first year of implementation and a 5-percent adjustment for the next two years.

The original Department of Finance proposal sought an increase of 50 percent in the first year, indexation of taxes for subsequent years, and reclassification of brands.

Teves claimed that his house-passed cigarette brands alone, a reclassification could have meant additional revenues of P11 billion. Based on the 20-percent tax rate increase under HB 3374, only P1 billion would be collected.

"I have to a fifth power of 29 billion on low grade cigarettes," he said.

BY ALLEGRO, A13

Bro. Mike's Pag-Ibig loan scored

By Volt Contreras
and Armand N. Nocum

MEGHAT groups yesterday assailed the grant of the P353-million Pag-Ibig loan to the real estate firm of El Shaddai leader Mike Velarde, saying the administration of President Macapagal-Arroyo was now engaging in payback.

"Let's call a spade a spade. No matter what they call it and even if they deny it, it's nothing but payback for El Shaddai's support for the President during the last election. They're fooling nobody but themselves," said Public

BOX, ESSAYS A-11

WEEPING for the man who symbolized for over 40 years the aspirations of the Palestinians to restore the name of their country on the map of the Middle East, a soldier from Arafat's presidential guard reflects the wave of grief that swept through his people after they learned of his death in Paris.

> "I have come bearing an olive branch and a freedom fighter's gun. Do not let the olive branch fall from my hand."
> —Arafat addressing the UN General Assembly, 1974

The words turned from war to peace

OVER the years, Yasser Arafat's words turned from war to peace in his struggle for a Palestinian state.

As head of the Palestine Liberation Organization since the 1960s and Palestinian president since the 1990s, in speeches and in interviews, he had some notable quotes:

1968—"Zionism is an enthusiasm of neo-fascism ... Israel is the base of aggression and racist exploitation."

1969—"Our new generation is fond of 'making' for something to happen. Isn't it better to die bringing down your country than to avoid a clear, honorable death resting in a war in the desert?"

—"We do not have an ideology. Our goal is the liberation of our homeland by any means necessary."

1974—"The end of Israel is the goal of our struggle, and it

FOR STORIES, A10

Death of Yasser Arafat marks end of an era

RAMALLAH, West Bank—Yasser Arafat, revered as the champion of Palestinian statehood and reviled as an opportunistic terrorist, died Thursday in the age of 75, sending scenes of grief through the Palestinian territories and sparking fears of a chaotic power struggle that could lead to fighting in the streets.

In a hurried effort to project continuity, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) elected former Palestinian Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas as its new chief, virtually ensuring he will succeed Arafat as leader of the Palestinians, at least for an interim period.

The Palestinian legislature also moved to Parliament Speaker Rauhi Fattouh as caretaker president of the Palestinian Authority until elections can be held in 60 days, according to Palestinian law.

Arafat died at 4:00 Thursday morning (12:00 p.m. Manila time) in a French military hospital. Neither his doctors nor Palestinian leaders said what killed him.

"He shared his cross and his big heart stopped. He left for God but

DAVID E-2

THE WARRIOR meets the saintly Mother Teresa in Calcutta and handed over a gift check of $50,000 for her Missionaries of Charity in 1986.

THE CONFIRMED bachelor married Suha half his age in 1990. Their daughter Zahwa was born 1995.

"FACE OF TERROR" as Israelis in 1970, he virtually started hijackings.

No tug-of-war over Garcia case, say AFP and Sandigan

By Alcuin Papa
and Armand N. Nocum

THE SANDIGANBAYAN and the Armed Forces yesterday announced that they were not engaged in a tug-of-war for jurisdiction over Maj. Gen. Carlos Garcia.

In a joint statement read by Lt. Col. Bienvenido Patrimil, chief of the AFP Public Information Office, the two parties said they were working hand in hand in prosecuting the former military comptroller now under house arrest in Camp Aguinaldo for P101 million in unexplained wealth.

"[We] are working in close cooperation and coordinating to ensure the prompt and smooth administration of justice," they said.

"There is no tug-of-war between the Sandiganbayan and the AFP as to who should have ... Garcia in custody."

The statement was issued in response to comments by lawmakers that civilian supremacy should prevail in Garcia's case.

But despite earlier assurance by the Ombudsman that civilian rule was paramount over the military, the third division of the Sandiganbayan yesterday issued an order formally giving the AFP Provost Marshal, Lt. Henry Galarpe, custody of the general.

Sandiganbayan chief sheriff Ed Ortera told the Inquirer that they presented the notice in Galarpe yesterday afternoon.

He said Associate Justice Roodolfo Legaspi of the court's third division had ordered Galarpe to "take custody [of Garcia] and hold [him] prisoner," and to produce him for arraignment before the Sandiganbayan at 2 p.m. on Nov. 19.

Ortera said it was important for the Sandiganbayan to make the issue of jurisdiction clear so as to pinpoint who would be held ac-

FULL STORY, A-11

Petron hikes gasoline prices by P1/liter, diesel by 50¢/liter

By Abigail L. Ho

CONSUMERS and motorists will have to bear yet another heavy burden as Petron Corp. raised prices of its gasoline by P1 a liter, diesel by 50 centavos a liter and cooking gas by P1.50 a kilogram at midnight last night.

Starting today, Petron's gasoline products can be bought at P28.28 a liter, diesel at P22.45 a liter and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) at P600 to P650 per 11-kilogram cylinder.

Other oil firms are expected to follow suit.

Since January, gasoline prices have risen 13 times for a total of P7.65 a liter, while diesel prices have risen 15 times for a total of P5 a liter. LPG prices have gone up 13 times for a total of P13.35 per 11-kg cylinder.

The good news, however, is that these price increases will be Petron's last for the rest of the year.

Virginia Bautista-Herron, public affairs manager, made this announcement yesterday, even in the face of still high crude and LPG contract prices.

At a briefing yesterday, Bautista said that while crude prices had already softened by about $1 a barrel, the $3 increase in freight rates since September translated into a higher crude landed cost.

Since freight rates as well as insurance and duty payments formed part of an oil firm's cost structure, these factors are also considered when companies decide on the prices of final products.

The high price of crude in the world market alone, Bautista said, had driven up Petron's working capital by P2 billion since the start of the year. This then translated into higher financing costs.

Despite this, she said Petron

PETRON, A-11

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2004

Second FRONTPAGE

WEATHER FORECAST

Spy chief's appointment recalled

Aglipay wants GMA kin out as PNP money man

By Christian F. Esguerra

By Fe Zamora

By Yo Zamora

METRO

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Your opinion counts Inquirer.com/letters/metro/letters@inquirer.com.ph (Globe) or 241 (Smart) Editor Rose C. Cipriano ■ Assistant Editor Carmen N. Nilo

CHEd names erring schools

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan

THE COMMISSION on Higher Education (CHED) identified yesterday the 23 nursing schools whose provisional permits expired last month.

Among those are the nursing schools in the ST campuses and in the AMA campus in Makati.

In a statement, CHED said these schools did not comply with the standards and requirements they are, namely having a qualified dean; a CHED-compliant curriculum; a related learning experience; and clinic/hospital.

CHED no longer renewed their provisional permits which expired last Sept. 30.

However, Dr. Brenda Asanza, AMA dean' operating officer, said they had appealed the order before the Office of the President and "found on their administrative rules, (the appeal) has the effect of a stay order.

"So we're back to status quo," he said.

Asanza said they submitted the names of two tertiary hospitals and one teaching hospital to their loan hospitals.

"So we have fully complied (with the requirements)," Asanza said.

(CU officials, meanwhile, declined giving an official statement.

But CHED Chair Fe Hermosa de La Rosa, OIC allowed AMA, ST and the other affected schools to operate until the end of the school year to give their students time to transfer to other nursing schools.

Nursing schools have mushroomed in the country due to a boom in the demand for nurses abroad and it is only now that CHED is taking actions to ensure quality.

Even doctors have turned to nursing to avail of high salaries abroad.

The 23 nursing schools ordered shut down were the following:

■ National Capital Region: 891 schools in Caloocan; Ellisbel City in Rizal Bonifacio, Makati City; Malolos, and Quezon Avenue; the AMA nursing school in Makati; and La Consolacion College in Caloocan City

■ Region II: Cagayan College of Tuguegarao; University of St. Louis Tuguegarao; and the University of Perpetual Help-Laguna Biñan campus)

■ Region III: Francisco Hojnos College, Sofitel College, and Tomas del Rosario College

(Turn to A4)

QC officials closely watch STD cases

By Tina G. Santos

THE QUEZON City health department is keeping a vigilant watch on all bar establishments operating in the city in a bid to prevent and control the spread of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).

Dr. Ma. Paz Ejalde, city health officer, said she already directed sanitary inspectors to closely monitor these establishments to ensure that the workers they employ, particularly those at high risk like sauna bath attendants and masseurs, are protected against all forms of STDs.

"We must not allow anyone who is tested positive to go back to work. Our main goal is to ensure that these workers undergo the necessary treatment and medication for whatever disease they may have acquired in the course of their work," Ejalde said.

She also urged all freelance workers in the city to register and have regular checkups at the Bernardo Health Center in Cubao and the Project 7 Health Center, social hygiene clinics that offer free specialized services for the prevention and control of STDs. The clinics are staffed by doctors, nurses and medical aides who are well-trained to handle STD cases.

Under the law, workers from the establishments are told to have regular checkups in these specialized social hygiene clinics before they can be given their respective health certificates, Ejalde said.

Guest relations officers, dancers and night club owners are advised to undergo monthly routine checkups, while masseurs and sauna bath attendants are required to have weekly examinations.

Magallanes bus terminal 'ill-conceived'

By Fergus C. Cruz

THE TUGUEGARAO area Magallanes commuters.

Makati City officials yesterday described the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority's proposal to build a South Transport Terminal in Magallanes as "an ill-conceived plan that will only worsen traffic and pollution in the city."

Makati Public Safety Director Henrieta San Miguel said they were surprised at MMDA Chair Bayani Fernando's "very ill-timed" hint on such a pronouncement.

"Chairman Fernando had agreed with Makati's assessment that the Magallanes area does not have enough room to accommodate all the provincial buses plying the southern Luzon route and hundreds of thousands of commuters," San Miguel said in a statement.

San Miguel said Makati's position in building a park in the area was part of the city's urban renewal program to "beautify."

However, Fernando told the Inquirer that there was enough space to accommodate the buses in the planned 2.4-km long terminal as he stressed that the Magallanes area was part of a national road and the property of the national government.

"The local government unit could not just do whatever it wants with the area," Fernando said in a phone interview.

He said the Makati City government could ask permission from the Department of Public Works and Highways for the establishment of the park.

"We are still asking them to reconsider their decision," Fernando said.

He stressed the importance of the Magallanes area because of the Metro Rail Transit, Philippine National Railway and other modes of transportation like city buses, jeepneys, UV expresses and tamaraw that pass through the area.

MMDA officials said the purpose of the STT was to remove provincial bus terminals along Edsa and lessen the most thoroughfare's vehicular volume.

The proposed terminal would stretch from the Skyway ramp on South Superhighway to the Magallanes interchange.

But San Miguel said the MMDA plan would only aggravate traffic in Makati's financial district.

He said that, at present, 800,000 vehicles and two million pedestrians make their way to Makati daily.

Missing Mt. Halcon mountaineer found dead

From page A1

Pierre Escalante, 21, a graduating nursing student of the University of the Philippines and member of the UP Mountaineering Club, was sighted on Wednesday midnight by Mangyan residents of the reserve town in Brg. Lantuyang, Socorro, Butuanjan Lantuyang and Mayaling, Naz.

Supt. Marcos Flores, Occidental Mindoro police director, said the injured mountaineer had a hard time retrieving Escalante's body while a Philippine Air Force helicopter spent many hours of maneuvering through thick clouds and trees in trying to reach the area, some 2,000 feet above sea level.

Father waiting

His body was finally recovered at around 4 p.m. yesterday, according to one of the rescuers, Manuel Guillermo of the PAF. It was placed in a green bag, which was picked up by helicopter in a nearby clearing at Sitio Apung Bukay, Brgy. Bayanan, and brought to the municipal ball grounds where Escalante's father Antonio and other people were waiting.

Halcon is part of a mountainous range dividing Mindoro Island into two provinces and has the second-tallest mountain open for mountain-climbing in the country.

According to a biodiversity report, the access to Halcon's summit takes two to three days of "almost continuous vertical climbs and steep descents, bedding only onto boulders and exposed roots; feeling rivers, passing along deep cliffs and rocky walls and being blown by forest bushes."

'Sweet' daughter

Escalante's father, a farmer from Cubao, Socorro, told the Inquirer that he (father) expects Pierre to be an strong-willed. He described her as "very sweet, outstanding, bahin-sani ang-pa-lucky."

Escalante arrived at the site in Calapan City in the afternoon of Oct. 20, a day after her mountaineering companions, numbering about 20, had already taken off in lamtuyang bus (the kind used to truck and tractor the village at around 7 a.m.

She stayed in the house of a villager, Cherry Macarang, and began her ascent at around 6 a.m., said Renato Pedilla, president of the Halcon Mountaineers.

On Nov. 2, Escalante's group came down the mountain, four are least late.

Wrong route

She might have taken the wrong route, Flores said during a meeting with PAF personnel led by Capt. Hoel Pleita-do, Naz. Mayor Gracianne de la Chica, and several journalists. "Instead of going straight, she turned left."

Pedilla said Escalante might have slipped and fell into the river strewn with rocks.

Flores said the Mangyan rescuers found her body but did not touch it. "They instead went to the base camp in Lantuyang at the foot of Halcon, some six hours of trekking, and reported to the barangay chief, Conrado Pangilan, who is also a Mangyan.

The body was brought to the Rural Health Unit beside the municipal hall for examination. Her personal belongings have been placed in a narrow bag.

Numerous contusions

It was "decomposing," said Dr. Ernesto Mamaru, the municipal health officer. "Mamaong nona ang kanyang mukoong nadilat. Dahil ang kanyang [The body is intact but has numerous contusions. She might have slipped]."

Samaco dismissed the idea of foul play.

Escalante's body was brought to a funeral parlor in Calapan City, an hour-long ride from here, at around 5 p.m.

Antonio wanted to bring his youngest child back to Socorro as soon as possible. He expressed gratitude and admiration to all those who helped in the search for his daughter.

Among those in the rescue team were members of the PAF's 505th Wing, 505th Provincial Mobile Group in Cubi-rental Mindoro, Boys' police, fire Mangyan and other volunteers.

REMAINS of Pierre Escalante are placed inside a body bag for transportation to Naz., Mindoro, by the PAF 505th search and rescue personnel.

Fourth Issue

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Tungo sa ABC ng ICT

DIWA

Bro. Mike's . . .

From page A1

Lanto, president of the confederation of government workers called Courage.

According to Carol Araullo, convenor of the umbrella group Bayan/Watch, the four "miracles of corruption" and shower the Arroyo administration's lack of "sensitivity" to the public.

"This is payment for using us [us] to [person alcohol]," Araullo said. "This doesn't speak well of the administration. It is giving us much pain [and] resentment to people identified with it."

Lanto called for an investigation of what it said was Malacañang's "political concession" to the wealthy charitable evangelist, which, he said, had sent an "insensitive" message to ordinary wage-earners contributing to the Pag-Ibig fund.

He said housing officials must be called to explain why Velarde's Ameri condominium project had just become the single biggest individual borrower in the history of Pag-Ibig.

"In the face of the 'robust loans et cronies, adventurous and pork-ize of past administrations pursued by government-owned and controlled corporations, which have remained unsettled, the final story just became another one, this time of the employees' fund going down the drain," Lanto warned.

Hall 'insensitive'

He said it was "insensitive" of Vice President Noli de Castro, who also chairs the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council, to announce that Pag-Ibig fund members could avail themselves of the housing units that Velarde was building. "After using my money they will sell the units to us for an astounding cost of P1,0-1.0 million per unit. It's just like being fried in one's own lard. It's a profit-making enterprise at the expense of the [Pag-Ibig] members," Lanto said, adding:

"Pag-Ibig funds come from the blood and sweat of government employees. How they are being tapped as milking cows. It's appalling that when it's the employees' turn to use their contributions, there's nothing left for them."

The Inquirer was unable to reach Pag-Ibig president Rosario Quimbo on the phone, but he logged off from making comment.

He said he was hosting a tee for Castro, who also chairs the Pag-Ibig board of trustees, to update to the media how far the loan was granted.

After Robles' appointment

Bayan/Watch's Araullo pointed out that the initial release of P600 million from the loan came about two months after the President appointed Melquiades "Mel" Robles, Velarde's former spokesperson, as administrator of the Light Railway Transit Authority.

"In the minimum, there is no debatable. It smacks of cronyism. And if we have the opportunity to really dig into it, we suspect we would find impropriety," she told the Inquirer in a phone interview.

Araullo said there were many things to be cleared about the loan, including the question of whether Pag-Ibig would shell out the money or merely act as a guarantor in the loan from the Bank of Commerce.

"On the surface, it is more than [Velarde's] to-Harvar one used to secure the loan," she said.

The loan is for the construction of Velarde's Ameri Mansions, a 2,000-unit resident subdivision in the Arroyo-Sumaroc Park in San Dionisio, Parañaque.

It is among the biggest loans in Pag-Ibig.

Transparency

But Inc administration lawmakers defended the grant of the loan to Velarde, saying the housing project was being implemented with "full transparency" and pursuant to Mr. Arroyo's agenda of 10 generation and economic development.

House Majority Leader Prospero Nograles said the Arroyo administration never intended to keep the housing project under wraps, as shown by the media's full coverage of the ceremonies since on Wednesday.

He said that as the former chair of the House committee on housing and urban development, he knew that the project had been in line with the President's agenda of job generation and economic development through affordable housing for the masses.

Davao del Sur Rep. Douglas Cagas, vice chair of the House committee on good government, said the government through the Pag-Ibig fund owed Inquirer P45 million in the 10-percent interest in ten years imposed on Velarde's housing loan.

But there's nothing wrong, however, he said, the government could generate jobs and encourage more investors to undertake similar housing projects through government assistance, which could spur development.

Tell me more about Diwa SEMs.

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Tourism up 27% this year

TOURIST arrivals rose 26.7 percent in the first three quarters of the year compared to the same period last year, with Americans and Japanese topping the list.

The increase in arrivals clearly proved that the perception that the Philippines is a dangerous destination was "misplaced," said Tourism Secretary Joseph Ace Durano.

"Foreigners, particularly Americans and Japanese, are untouched by countries and yet they continue to come in large numbers despite negative travel advisories that have been issued by their or other countries," Durano said in a statement.

That year, the United States, United Kingdom, Canada and Australia warned their citizens against traveling to the Philippines, particularly to Mindanao, for a variety of reasons, such as terrorist threats, political instability and kidnappings.

From January to September 2004, American visitors reached 352,132, accounting for 20.9 percent of total arrivals. The was a 33 percent increase from last year's figure.

Japanese arrivals rose 22.7 percent from last year, registering 269,593, or 17.1 percent of the total.

South Korean tourists came next, followed by the mainland Chinese, who are the target of Durano's enhanced and re-focused marketing strategy.

Durano credited the efforts of his predecessors, Sen. Richard Gordon and Roberto Ongpin, now chief of the Philippine Investment and Trading Corp.

"Their game plans worked and buttressed the Philippines' image as a viable tourist destination," he said. Jerome Aning

Iraq-bound OFWs held

THE BUREAU of Immigration yesterday said it had barred 18 overseas Filipino workers from leaving the country after learning that they were bound for Iraq and Afghanistan.

Immigration Commissioner Alipio Fernandez Jr. said the passengers, who passed themselves off as tourists, were offloaded from separate flights at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport last Monday.

Noticed and then after further inspection, immigration authorities found out that 16 of the passengers were bound for Iraq via Bangkok, Thailand, while the rest were documented for flights capital Kabul.

The Afghanistan-bound passengers attempted to leave for the neighboring state of Kyrgyzstan as a ploy to divert the immigration officers' attention from their real destination, the commissioner recounted.

The passengers were turned over to the NBI for investigation and their passports confiscated. The workers were earlier detained nor charged but asked to give statements regarding their employment and recruitment.

The BI did not disclosed to reveal the names of the passengers, who, he said, were mere victims of illegal recruiters bent on defying the government ban on the deployment of workers to Iraq and Afghanistan.

DOLE orders Luisita strikers to return to work

By Jerome Aning

THE DEPARTMENT of Labor and Employment has taken over jurisdiction of the labor dispute at the Central mechanized de Tarlac to Hacienda Luisita and ordered the striking workers to return to their jobs and for the company to admit them within 24 hours.

In a four-page order dated Nov. 10 but issued only yesterday, Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas also deputized the police authorities to enforce her directive if either or both parties refuse to comply.

She said that the company, being a sugar central, belongs to an industry that was cited in the national economy. She said sugar is "a product, which is not only a basic commodity but also a raw material for other industries."

Luisita is owned by the family of former President Corazon C. Aquino.

"A strike or lockout in the company will greatly affect the production and supply of sugar in the market. In the light of the fact that the sugar industry itself is unstable, public interest dictates that the State prevent a work stoppage or lockout from occurring and immediately with the labor dispute affecting the sugar industry," she said.

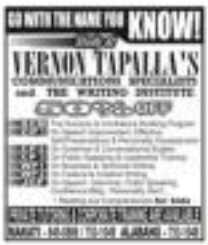
The intervention, Sto. Tomas said, was "both timely and appropriate," especially in the current case where the dispute could affect the employment of more than 700 workers and those who are dependent on them, including employees or other industries that are dependent on the supply of sugar.

'Books and blocks' seminar

"BOOKS and Blocks: The Basics of a Pre-school Childhood," a seminar organized by the Montessori-based Early Childhood Education Advocates for parents and teachers of preschool children, will be held on Nov 13 at Regency Inn, #8 La Abella Dawn, Davao City.

Resource speakers from Manila are Susi Sta. Romana-Cruz of the Akiki Anhan Foundation and a teacher at International School Manila Ria de Veyra, who coaches graduate schools-to-be Early Childhood Curriculum and Recovery at the De La Salle University and Lolita Teatte, a trainer of preschool teachers and daycare workers. There will be an exhibit/sale of children's books and wooden blocks and materials.

ACEA is a group of concerned teachers, administrators, parents and caregivers in Mindanao who are advocating for developmentally appropriate practices in the early childhood years. It strongly believes in learning through play.



Benipayo asks SC to junk bid vs Smokey

By Philip C. Tubeza

SOLICITOR General Alfredo Benipayo on Wednesday asked the Supreme Court to dismiss the petition of lawyer Francisco Chavez to void the P8.4-billion Smokey Mountain Development Project.

In a 55-page comment, Benipayo urged the high court to dismiss the petition to void the deal between the National Housing Authority and ALI Builders Inc., adding that it was riddled with procedural and substantial lapses.

Benipayo also said that Chavez, himself a former solicitor general, should not have waited more than 10 years before challenging the project's legality.

'Why now?'

"Why only now? Where this is supposed to be a taxpayer's suit whose object is to prevent the improper disbursement of public funds and, hence, should be filed at the earliest opportunity," Benipayo said.

He noted that two congressmen in quotes found the project to be legal and above board and "thousands of homeless beneficiaries" have already moved into the housing buildings provided by the project.

"To still vote to invalidate the huge and pivotal dumpsite into a habitable neighborhood and its peripheries, an area for commerce and industry," Benipayo said.

"Not more than this, it was calculated to bring hope to the multitude who, live miserably in the fringes of the dumpsite and make them independent, self-reliant and responsible citizens," he added.

Benipayo said Chavez erred in stating that the 79 hectares of land reclaimed for the project are part of the public domain and are therefore inalienable.

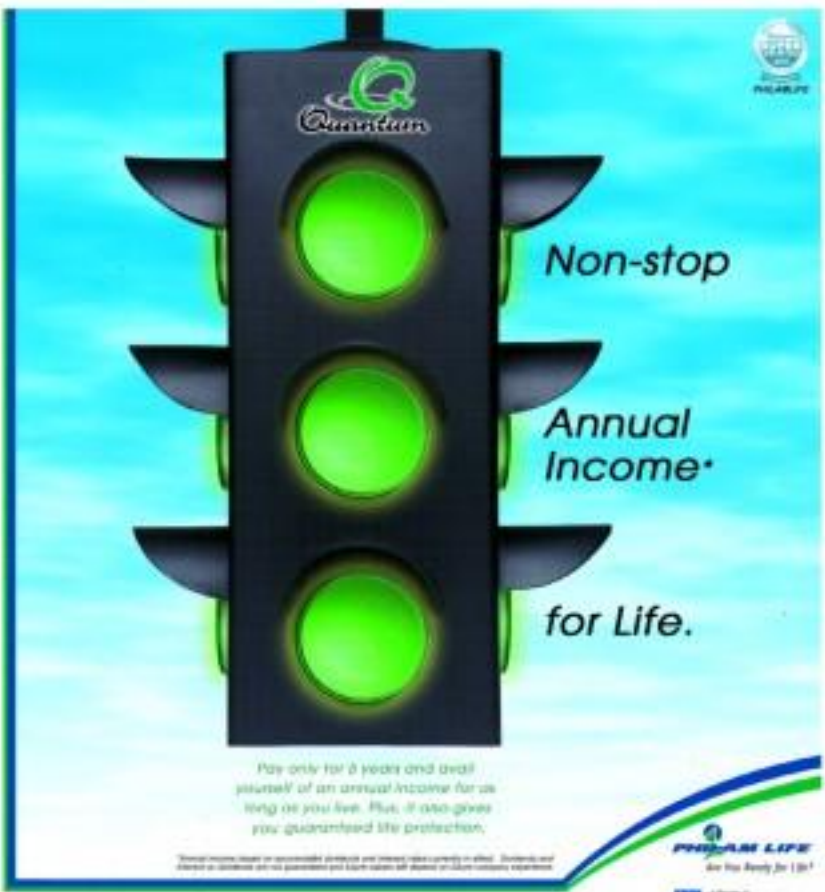
Three directives

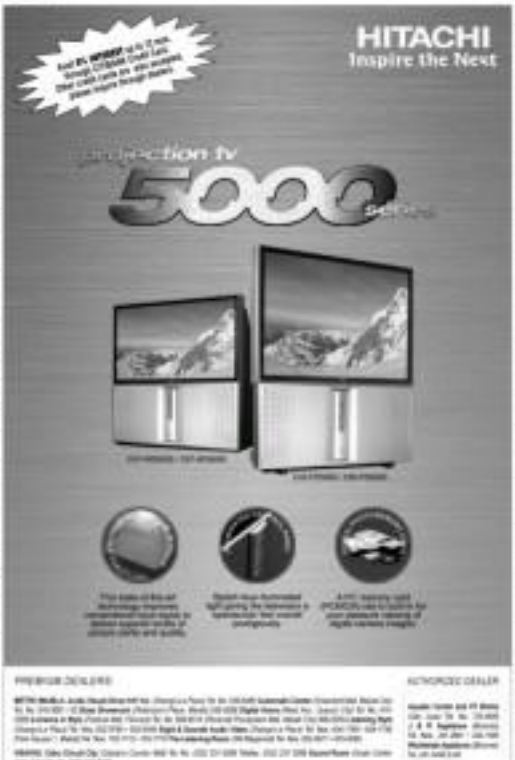
He said that three presidential directives issued by former Presidents Corazon Aquino and Fidel Ramos transformed the reclaimed land to an patrimonial land, which, under the law, may be transferred and disposed of by the National Housing Authority.

"Surprisingly, the petitioner did not include in his suit the validity of these presidential issuances and memorandum orders. He merely focused in on the contracts between respondents MDS and ALI Builders," Benipayo said.

"By leaving out these presidential issuances and memorandum orders, the attorneys of the petitioner is questioning the legality of the [project] most necessary [evil]," he added.

Benipayo said that the Build-Operate-Transfer Law also allowed the implementation of the project. Under the BOT Law, the repayment scheme for land reclamation may consist of the grant of a portion of the reclaimed land, he added.





Angara confirms meeting with GMA

OPPOSITION senators yesterday said they were not privy to Sen. Edgardo Angara's "unity" talks with President Macapagal-Arroyo early this month.

According to Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. and Senators Juan Ponce Enrile, Panfilo Lacson and Gregory Honasan, Angara had not informed them of his Nov. 1 meeting with the President.

Senate President Franklin Drilon and Speaker Jose de Venecia were present at the meeting in the President's Forbes Park residence, in which Ms Arroyo "offered different posts" in the Cabinet to Angara. The senator did not say what specific posts were offered.

Pimentel, the de facto leader of the opposition in the Senate, said Angara had informed him later about the meeting and was supposed to disclose details in a senate caucus on Monday, but he got sidetracked and threw up.

He said Angara had mentioned the offer of Cabinet positions to the opposition, "but not necessarily himself."

Explaining why he did not clear his move with the minority bloc, Angara said that he "was not carrying the minority ... the only minority was in the LDP party."

He clarified that he was not after any government posts in exchange for his cooperation.

Angara said that the framework of cooperation was the beginning of an opposite of the Senate.

"Cooperation doesn't mean that we have to leave the opposition. It doesn't mean that we have to abandon our fiscalization role. It's a government of national unity that's their offer, meaning on equal footing," he said.

Pimentel said he would have to know what the terms of the President's offer were.

"She might be thinking that we give up our role as opposition," he said.

Majority senators, however, welcomed Angara's move.

"It is well-help heal and unite the country, then all efforts to help us move forward should be welcomed," said Senate Majority Leader Francis Escudero.

But he said that uniting with key opposition figures must be based on principles and "a common understanding of the problems we face and a sincere and genuine resolve to work together for the nation's progress and development." Michael Lim Ubac

Caroling only for kids, cops told

By Christine V. Esguerra

IF A POLICEMAN turns up at your door singing traffic rules or simply asking for money "in the spirit of Christmas," tell him to leave.

Philippine National Police Director General Edgar Aglipay has issued a directive discouraging in any kind of "fund-raising" activity—a euphemism for extortion—during the Christmas holidays.

Taking off from Aglipay's directive, Director Isagani Nuñez Jr. has ordered all Metro Manila policemen to keep their Christmas parties "austere considering the financial situation that the country is experiencing."

Nuñez said the PNP leadership was aware that some "enterprising" policemen sell raffle tickets or solicited cash and gifts from households for a police office or unit's Christmas party.

He said some of the fund-raising activities had "dubious beneficiaries."

"This practice is violative of standing PNP directives and policy guidance prohibiting unauthorized PNP-promoted fund-raisers/limited fund solicitations," he said in the memorandum dated Nov. 8.

Nuñez said unit commanders would be held responsible for policemen caught "soliciting" this Christmas.

US envoy says negotiating does not pay

By TJ Burgonio

UNITED States Ambassador Francis Ricciardone yesterday warned the Philippines against negotiating with the kidnappers of newsman Robert Tercapio in Iraq, saying this would only encourage more kidnappings of Filipinos.

"When you make concessions to the kidnappers, you invite more kidnappings. They will identify your country or state are going to and then you get more of the same," he said after having wreaths at the American University in Makati to mark the US Veterans Day.

Ricciardone said the US would not pay a cement under any circumstances and does not "make concessions to kidnappers."

Ricciardone also rejected the kidnappers' demand for the release of prisoners being held in Iraq/prisons.

"We don't make concessions to terrorists. Something like 170 foreigners have been kidnapped in Iraq. Something like 30 foreigners have been killed and it's never a good idea to make concessions when people are kidnapped. We don't do that," he said.

The 31-year old Tercapio was among six employees, including an American, of the Saudi-Iranian Trading and Contracting Co. snatched by gunmen inside their office in Baghdad on Nov. 1.

The unidentified kidnappers have demanded $2.2 million for the freedom of the Americans hostage and another $30 million for Tercapio.

Philippine foreign affairs officials rejected paying any ransom to Tercapio's kidnappers, but said that negotiations for his release were going on.

Ricciardone said that the Philippine government was "devoting an awful lot of attention to a happy resolution of this problem to protect the lives of your people that are now in crisis."

"We respect, we support that. We'll do anything we can to help," he said.

In Kabul, Afghanistan, where Taliban-linked militants are holding three United Nations workers, including Filipina diplomat Angelita Nayan, the kidnappers yesterday claimed that the Afghan government has agreed to free some of their jailed comrades in exchange for the hostages' release.

But the government hasn't confirmed the deal.

Afghan state television reported that President Hamid Karzai had ordered the release of prisoners for Eid, the end of the Muslim fasting month, expected on Sunday. But there was no confirmation the deal involved the kidnapped aid workers, including the hostage taken. With reports from AP and AFP

Go not giving up fight

CESO is not giving up in its bid to become a regular member of the Philippine Olympic Committee (POC) before the 2005 Southeast Asian Games.

"I promised the national chefdemission that 90-20 will become a regular member of the POC before the 2005 SEA Games in terms of the incentives for their impressive performance in tournaments here and abroad. The current POC leadership may have rested against this simple request but I'm now pinning my hopes on the incoming leadership," said chefdemission Jimmy Kho.

Kho said he would appreciate the incumbent board of incoming POC president Peping Cojuangco's ruling, or a borrower reason, the pro-Olympical boost to the players of the elevation of NCFP to a higher status in the POC.

The executive board of outgoing presidents Celso Dayrit had voted against NCFP's appeal for regular membership on Wednesday. The board said chefs should remain an associate member.

Top horseowners back program vs EIA

THE COUNTRY'S leading horseowners' groups yesterday joined hands to give the Philippine Racing Commission full backing to its all-out war against the Equine Infectious Anemia (EIA) virus.

In a show of unity, the big guns of the Metropolitan Association of Race Horse Owners, the Philippine Thoroughbred Owners and Breeders Organization and Club Inc. led by de Manila

The WORLD

Editor Lawrence B. Ganaa

US troops capture most of Fallujah

FALLUJAH, Iraq—US Marines shelled targets in Fallujah on Thursday after saying they had seized 70 percent of the city and vowing to hunt down surviving rebels.

"There are large numbers of US forces across Fallujah, based on intelligence from tanks going in and out, and from radio traffic," Marine SK'Opt. Rey Meek said.

Meek, whose rank category operates in southwest Fallujah, was speaking after Marine artillery opened up on targets in the nearby Julan district, scene of some of the fiercest fighting since a full-scale assault on Fallujah began on Monday night.

Another Marine, who asked not to be named, said he had seen large concentrations of US soldiers, Marines and copper units gathering on the major highway that runs past east of Fallujah.

About 10,000 US soldiers and Marines, backed by 2,000 Iraqi government troops, are engaged in the battle for Iraq's most rebellious city, 60 kilometers of Baghdad.

With the offensive in its third full day, a death threat hung over many of interim Prime Minister Iyad Allawi's ruthless kidnapped by Islamist militants.

A militant group has threatened to behead Allawi's 75-year-old cousin Ghazi and two relatives if Allawi pushes his raids off the streets. The government has said its policy will not change.

Insurgents have also hit back with bloody attacks in other towns and cities, mainly targeting Iraqi security forces.

The Swedish government governor of Kirkuk escaped without when a car bomb blew up near his convoy in the northern city on Thursday, police said. Sixteen people were wounded.

Allawi then says dozens people, including two American soldiers, were killed in attacks in Baghdad and the northern Wednesday.

A Marine spokesperson said the same day that 33 Iraqi forces had taken 70 percent of Fallujah, but did not have full control.

"[We] still need to go house to house in that area to ensure there aren't any anti-Iraqi forces left," he said.

The Iraqi military government in Fallujah said his men had found "slaughterhouses" where rebels held their held and killed hostages, along with records of victims.

But Maj. Gen. Mahdi Qader Assam said reporters he could not say if the evidence offered any clues to the fate of at least nine foreign hostages still missing.

Intense bouts of fighting shook the Sunni Muslim city at times on Wednesday. The US military said rebels had launched a massive offensive to drive Arafat's hand to power it," Clinton wrote in his best-selling book, "My Life."

"The whole world will be watching, and the handshake is what they will be looking for," the president added.

"Rabin sighed, and in his deep, world-weary voice, said, 'I suppose one does not make peace with one's friends.' 'Then you'll do it?' I asked. An almost-resigned at me. 'All right, all right. But no kissing.'"

Clinton had to produce maneuvers, with his aides to prevent Arafat from making a traditional Arab kiss on the cheek when he appeared with Rabin on the lawn in front of the White House.

The only way to get Clinton to separate Arafat's right cheek with his left hand as he came to the lawn, **he wrote.**

"I knew Arafat was a great showman and might try to line Rabin after the handshake. We had decided that I would shake hands with each of them first, then sort of motion them together," Clinton explained.

"I must confess that if Arafat didn't give me, he wouldn't try kissing Rabin. I have avoiding the kiss was actually serious for Rabin."

Arafat and Rabin met first in side the White House.

Arafat told Rabin to Rabin and held out his hand. Then Rabin's hand were firmly grasped behind his back. He said wryly, 'Outside.' Arafat just smiled and nodded his understanding.

"Then Rabin said, 'You know, we are not going to have to work very hard to make this work.' Arafat replied, 'I know, and I am prepared to do my part.'"

After including the accords, the Clinton set a ninety day on the Israeli-Lebanon warned was to be a triumph for Arafat, Rabin and Clinton, though all looked nervous. AP

CHOR: 1,000 US flags adorn the front lawn of the Zumbo Motion in Harrisburg, Pa., Nov. 10. The flagraisers placed for a Wreaking of the Colors service honoring the more than 1,100 US military personnel killed in the war in Iraq. –

How Clinton avoided Arafat kissing Rabin during peace accord signing

WASHINGTON—It was the signing of a historic peace accord at the White House: Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin reluctantly agreed to shake hands with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, but he was adamant: "no kissing."

Forget to president Bill Clinton tells the story of the peace-accord on Sept. 13, 1993, in his memoir.

Clinton had a tough time trying to break the ice between the two Middle East rivals. The president later entrusted Arafat for holding up another peace initiative.

Arafat and Rabin had come together at the White House to sign the first Oslo peace accord, put together after months of tough negotiations in the Norwegian capital. Rabin was assassinated in November 1995 by an Israeli extremist angered by the accords.

"I told Yitzhak that if he was really committed to peace, he'll have to shake Arafat's hand to

Arthritis painkillers losing their luster

WASHINGTON—One by one, arthritis drugs that promised to ease pain without causing ulcers are losing their luster.

In September, Merck & Co. pushed Vioxx from the market when a trial showed that long-term use of the painkiller nearly doubled the risk of heart attack and stroke.

This week, researchers said a preliminary study showed that doctors prescribe painkillers in the same class...aleve more than double the risk of heart attacks and strokes among patients with heart disease.

Pfizer, which manufactures Bextra, said researchers made "misinformed conclusions" during their presentation at the annual meeting of the American Heart Association in New Orleans.

The company also said the research was "based on information that has not been published in a medical journal or subject to independent scientific review."

The news sent a ripple through the investing and caused the company's stock to tumble.

Pfizer already has told regulators it will add to its packaging a black box warning, the most severe, about, to visit a committee of the agency's food and drug division tasked to Bextra.

Ramifide witnessed a call for more studies of the painkillers in patients with heart disease, the group likely to suffer the most from the drugs' side effects. Dr. Eric Topol, a cardiologist at Cleveland Clinic Foundation, said the Bextra study already has prompted discussion of safer alternatives. And some presumed the Food and Drug Administration to halt advertising directed to consumers. AP

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Lawsuit over Diana fund settled

LOS ANGELES—A New Jersey that threatened to cripple the charity set up to honor Britain's Princess Diana was dropped Wednesday after an 11th-hour settlement averted an emphatic ruling in favor.

The embattled Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund and UK-based accounts maker Franklin Mint settled the $15-million malicious prosecution lawsuit just as a jury was set to be selected for trial.

Franklin Mint launched the suit in 2001, after the fund sued the company in 1998 alleging that Franklin Mint had illegally produced unlicensed Diana dolls, plates, jewelry and other trinkets without permission.

"The parties acknowledge that the energy and resources that would other-wise be consumed by continuing litigation would be better devoted to scientifically agreed international projects of humanitarian merit in honor of the memory of Diana, Princess of Wales," the fund said in a statement.

"The Mint's claim that the fund and its trustees acted with malice in initiating a trademark action against it in 1998...has been withdrawn in recognition of the fact that the fund's trustees acted in good faith reliance on advice received from their former American attorneys," it said.

The deal was announced on the same day that a jury members were due to be selected for a complex and publicity-packed trial in Los Angeles that could have lasted as long as 90 days.

The Franklin Mint had accused the fund and its trustees of maliciously pursuing the firm through the courts in order to damage its business and reputation.

The suit was a response to the lawsuit the fund's 1998 action in which it claimed that Franklin Mint and its California-based owners Stewart and Linda Resnick were "villains feeding on the dead."

But the charity lost its case and was left with $7.4 million in legal bills while becoming a target for ridicule. AFP

Serbs apologize for Srebrenica

SARAJEVO, Bosnia-Herzegovina—Bosnian Serb authorities Wednesday apologized for the first time to relatives of around 8,000 Muslims killed by Serb forces in the 1995 Srebrenica massacre, Europe's worst atrocity since World War II.

"The government of Republika Srpska unreservedly the pain of relatives of the Srebrenica victims and expresses sincere regret and apologizes over the tragedy which has happened to them," a government statement said.

The Bosnian Serb government accepted last month an internal report by a special investigative commission which said that almost 8,000 Muslims were killed in the massacre, in the final stages of Bosnia's 1992-95 war.

The report marked the first time Bosnian Serb authorities have admitted the scale of the massacre after its troops overran the UN-protected enclave.

Serb authorities had previously downplayed the slaughter—classed as an act of genocide by the UN war crimes tribunal in The Hague—but the report's total of up to 8,000 victims is in line with independent estimates.

Muslim men and boys were separated from the women and murdered over several days after Serb forces swept through the enclave region. In by most church, 7,000 bodies have been exhumed from mass graves over Srebrenica.

Republika Srpska is the Serb-run entity which along with the Muslim-Croat federation makes up post-war Bosnia. Srebrenica was a predominantly Muslim town before the war but it is now part of Republika Srpska.

The Bosnian Serb government also said it was committed to bring to justice those responsible for the massacre—a key demand of the international community and the rulers of the entities.

"The Republika Srpska government is concerned and is undertaking decisive steps to bring to justice all those who committed war crimes," the government said.

The UN war crimes tribunal has indicted Bosnian Serb's wartime leader Radovan Karadzic and his military commander, Ratko Mladic, for genocide for their alleged roles in the massacre.

Although the war ended nine years ago the two still remain at large, hiding somewhere in the Serbia Yugoslavia where they are still regarded as heroes by their Serbian supporters.

The Republika Srpska is the only territory of the former Yugoslavia that has not yet seen a single war crimes suspect despite relentless international pressure and sanctions. AFP

SPORTS

E-mail sr_sports@inquirer.com.ph
Lilia Tolentino & Philostates

Montaña rips ICTSI for solo lead

Baguion triples sink Archers as surprising Jewels extend victory streak to 4

By Marang Castillo

MONTAÑA, showing class in a closely fought game, turned back ICTSI-La Salle, 93-77, yesterday at the Pasig Sports Center, to grab the solo lead in the PBL Open Championship.

Alex Compton presided the leadership on the four and Freiluc Baguion hit two crucial steps in the clutch as Montaña won for the fourth straight time after opening up with a loss.

The Archers dropped to 3-3 despite getting 29 points from UAAP Finals Most Valuable Player Jeric Cardona.

Baguion's three pointers broke the game's last tie up at 69 and Montaña cleared its game in throwing a desperate La Salle rally.

"The players have defined the roles they are supposed to play and that augurs well for the team," said Montaña coach Robert Sison.

Asaduma Babrocks finished with 21 for Montaña sixteen while combining with Al Magpayo for 24 rebounds. Compton had 19 and Ito seven.

In the second game, Jubilee Medalla showers loaned on Gabby Espinas and Emerson Oreta in the clutch to post its first win in the tournament, a 85-53 spectator over Magnolia Ice Enerves II.

The Eagles snapped a four game slide with the victory while Magnolia dropped to 2-3.

The scores:

PCU Game:

MONTAÑA (93)—Edwards 21, Compton 19, Baguion 18, Magpayo 9, Ito 8, Bunag 7, Ogarillo 6, Mercado 4, Guerrero 2, Sanchez 2, Tagaca 2, Delgado 0, Jocson 0.

ICTSI-LA SALLE (77)—Cardona 29, Yee 11, Geer 11, Conde 7, Lucas 7, Ang 7, Arana 5, Bonifay 2, Ignacio 0.

Quarters: 21-18, 43-37, 69-62, 93-77

Second Game:

ADAMSON-MAGNOLIA (85)—Oreta 19, Espinas 16, Nieto 8, Mendoza 7, Alfonso 6, Mendoza 5, Abiol 5, Dalisay 5, Daga 5, Alberto, Del Rosario 0.

MAGNOLIA (53)—Cruz 11, Soriano 9, Ilo 9, Manalo 5, Fabiano 5, Moreno 3, Nieto 2, Cruz 2, Jones 1, Nuesa 0, Yared 0, Jose, Glenn 0.

Quarters: 21-9, 37-25, 63-41, 85-53

Hundred Presidents Invitational pro-am on

RICK Gibson, a Canadian who calls the Philippines home, and three other former PBA Open champions eat the hotshots in the business world in the third Hundred Presidents Invitational Pro-Am golf tournament which tees off today at Tagaytay Midlands.

Gibson, Gerald Bonnke, Robert Bachelor and Cecilio Cases lead 16 other crack pros in the chase for the P500,000 top prize while playing in a foursome with three amateurs in the 36-hole event co-promoted by Bella Restaurant Corp.

Antonio Lascuña, the leading money winner in the local circuit, Benjie Magsalin and Asian Tour veterans Enrico Zarate, Carlito Villanueva, Byrone Dalusung and Gedeon Lucero also other topnotch stars bid.

The amateur field will be composed of the who's who in the business scene, the leaders in whom this tournament, held for the third straight year through the efforts of the business, was started after.

The Hundred Presidents uses the pro-am format for the first time and the amateurs will be grouped in flights depending on their handicaps. Their average handicap will have a bearing on who they draw as a pro partner.

A 3-liter Toyota Camry valued at close to P1.8 million and sponsored by Arroyo-New Cuisine Restaurant, is the biggest prize stake in the amateur field. A hole in one on the 180-yard fifth hole will win the Camry.

Other sponsors are Security Bank, Callaway, BDC, Lacoste watches, Johnnie Walker, Philippine Airlines, GOBA Club Shares, Bank of Commerce, Reuters 20/20, Tiger, Newspaper Paraphernalia, Print Town, United Overseas Bank, Boy Printing Press, Grandeur Security and Cobase Spa.

Prize donors include Wilson, Seiko Made and Milano. PAL will be raffling off tickets to Las Vegas and Hong Kong. Marang R. Castillo

Go not giving up fight

Top horseowners back program vs EIA

SLR faces FedEx sans Duremdes

A HAMSTRING injury will keep Sta. Lucia star Kenneth Duremdes (right) on the bench today

Lee in sight of second straight net title

WORLD YOUTH TILT

Prince takes cudgels for Filipino chessers

By Rap Laurea

Chase crooks, not law-abiding cagers

CLEAN LIVING

Manolo P. Aliga

BEAT The Christmas RUSH!

Garcias barred from leaving

JUSTICE Secretary Raul Gonzalez yesterday ordered the Bureau of Immigration to bar Maj. Gen. Carlos Garcia and his family from leaving the country.

Gonzalez said he issued a hold-departure order on Garcia, his wife Clarita, and their sons Ian Carl, Juan Paolo and Timothy Mark on the request of the Ombudsman's Office of the Special Prosecutor, and "in the public and national interest."

He said the Department of Justice found "cogent need" to issue the hold-departure order "to ensure [the Garcias'] presence in the civil and criminal proceedings or immediately accomplish the aims of justice."

Gonzalez also noted that the Ombudsman had filed a forfeiture case against the Garcias before the Fourth division of the Sandiganbayan. Philip C. Tubeza

No tug-of-war over Garcia case

From page A1

commander should Garcia fail to appear in court for hearings or in the event of his escape from detention.

But according to Senate Majority Leader Francis Pangilinan, President Macapagal-Arroyo "must order the AFP to turn Garcia over to the Sandiganbayan."

He warned the military against "coddling and giving preferential treatment" to Garcia, saying the AFP was "not above the law" and should allow Ulitria to take custody of Garcia.

"How can the law be seen as fair and blind when we give special treatment to certain members of society? This 'Cabil' boys club' reinforces the common perception that if you are powerful and well-placed, you get special perks even if you have a pending case," Pangilinan said yesterday in a statement.

'Deprived of liberty'

Bernas, however, pointed out that Garcia was "already arrested by the AFP and remains in military custody so analogue is general court-martial (not work)."

"[Garcia] is re-arrested in quarters, and this is a lawful deprivation of his liberty under military law," Bernas said, adding:

"If the Sandiganbayan directs the AFP to surrender custody over ... Garcia, the AFP will promptly comply."

Bernas added that whether Garcia was in the custody of the military or of the court, "he will continue to face charges before both the military court and the Sandiganbayan, and his arraignment at all hearings will be ensured."

He said the AFP would "strictly follow" whatever the Sandiganbayan would decide on the custody of Garcia.

The Sandiganbayan has issued three arrest warrants on Garcia. The third, issued by Associate Justice Teresita Leonardo-de Castro of the first division, was served yesterday at 3:30 p.m.

Gudmalin told reporters that he had given the document earlier granted.

He quoted Garcia as saying in Filipino: "Sino ito sa sin. Mi lawyer will take care of it."

Garcia is facing four charges of perjury and also court martial for violation of Articles of War 96 and 97.

GARCIA: Preferential treatment? AFP PHOTO

Not a bad idea

In a phone interview earlier yesterday, Ombudsman Simeon Marcelo said his office was awaiting the military request to the Sandiganbayan for permission to keep custody of Garcia and prevent him from court during hearings.

If no request is made, the Office of the Ombudsman will file a motion for the military to produce Garcia and turn him over to the anti-graft court should the Court of Appeals grant his wish to be released from his quarters valued by interior on Nov. 10, Marcelo said.

Marcelo said it was important for the Sandiganbayan to establish who really has jurisdiction over Garcia to ensure his presence in hearings, as well as pinpoint responsibility in the event of his escape.

He said the court also needed to rule "formal jurisdiction" of Garcia.

Nevertheless, Marcelo said, keeping Garcia in military custody was not a bad idea because there would be more people watching him.

A legal officer of the Sandiganbayan earlier explained that under "normal procedures," Garcia will be brought before the third division's clerk of court for "processing" and fingerprinting first.

It is at this point that his mug shot and fingerprints will be taken.

What bonus? . . .

From page A1

and used to finance our children's tuition fees," this was the reaction of the Confederation for the Unity, Recognition and Advancement of Government Employees (Courage) on the Department of Budget and Management's announcement of the recent release of a P9.3 billion fund for government employees' yearend bonuses.

"Ma'am, in the economic realities of government employees as conceived, the traditional yearend bonus and cash gift has been long spent even before it is received. The 13th month pay has been collateral for loans," said Courage in a statement.

P1,000 increase, please

The group said there would have been reason to be happy if the government found a way to grant the P5,000 across-the-board increase Courage has been demanding.

"It would have made a difference if it is our demand for a salary increase. The yearend bonus would only pass [the] hands [of government workers] and in some cases from the payroll straight to the money lenders and loan sharks," Courage said.

"With a monthly salary of P6,282 and the price of a Lapanday Davaonan Eat increasing from P500 in 2000 to P900 this month, how does the government expect a employees to survive?" Courage said.

"Just about everything has gone up, fuel, electricity, transportation, water and even the prices of basic goods and services but not our salaries," the employees' group said.

Last pay hike in 2000

The last time government workers received a raise was in 2000, when the basic pay which then stood at P6,500 was raised by five percent to P540.

Nov. 24 rally

Courage national president Pedro Enin announced that government employees are set to hold their biggest rally this coming Nov. 24 in Manila.

"We will bring to Malacañang's attention all our issues—pay hike demand, the roster of COLT PCSP [Philippine] Bureau, opposition to the rationalization plan, transfer of offices, reorganization, privatization and other forms of lay off," Enin said.

No moral authority

"As the sole employer of the biggest workforce, this government has become bereft of any moral authority given the way it treats its workers," he added.

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OPINION

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Jurisdiction

EDITORIALS

THE ISSUE of the supposed corruption in the military threatens to go the way of the dodo, with the meteoric cost of living—double, triple whammies coming our way with the intensity of broken promises—variously riveting public attention. The issue, as earlier parties latched by the case of Maj. Gen. Carlos Garcia's enrichment soon both have and shrunk, was fritzered away by the very same case by dint of its incredible details (thousands of dollars taken out of the Philippines and into the United States, a condo at the Trump Tower, nine vehicles in the old country, among many other things) and appears to have slipped through the cracks. Recall that the former Armed Forces comptroller who has never experienced being on a battlefield was able to swing things all by his lonesome, and no one else in the military's bureaucratic maze is liable.

The progress of Garcia's case itself does not look encouraging. The yet to be resolved issue on who should have "control" over him is worrisome, and, like any other legal conundrum, bids fair to take up more time than it should. ("How can you arrest a man who is already in jail?" Sandiganbayan sheriff Edgardo Urieta said on Wednesday when a second arrest warrant was served on the general. By "jail," of course, Urieta meant Garcia's confinement to quarters. Of course, it's not clear to the general public whether being jailed and being confined to quarters are the same. For example, does a general in jail have a houseboy to look after his needs, the way Garcia in his quarters reportedly does? The workings of the military, particularly as these apply to the brass, are not exactly common knowledge to the average scathing staff.)

The way things stand, the Office of the Ombudsman is preparing to ask the Sandiganbayan or rule on the matter of jurisdiction over Garcia. (But both the military and the anti-graft court now maintain that "there is no tug-of-war" over him, and that they are in "close cooperation" regarding the case.) And between this and the new definitive legal development, public attention is being stretched away from the case and necessarily focusing more and more on the startling rise in power rates, the looming increase in other utility bills, the prospect of unhappy holidays (despite Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye's feel-good blitz), the government's amazingly indelicate grant of a P233-million loan to the condominium project of Ill Hundred's Mike Velarde...

Indictment

IT GOES without saying that public expectation requires a satisfactory resolution of the case involving Maj. Gen. Carlos Garcia's unexplained wealth (that is, if the issue of the supposed corruption in the military is too huge a problem to take on in this country of enduring, because systemic, problems). But a satisfactory resolution appears to be a formidable task, given that despite the statements of the contending (but cooperating) parties, the Sandiganbayan's "formal jurisdiction" over the general has yet to be enforced.

The statement issued by Batigas del Sur Rep. Prospero Pichay on Wednesday called attention to the "glaring failures" in the system of military justice.

While assailing the military for its supposed refusal to surrender Garcia to civilian authorities, Pichay called for amendments to the rules governing the prosecution and trial of military personnel. He cited the case of Army Captains Peter Edwin Navarro, Philip Estravalda and Bernhert Raphon—by his account, all decorated and all languishing in solitary confinement in a maximum-security prison in Fort Bonifacio since Jan. 28. That's two days after the three officers, all of the so-called "Kawal" group, denounced the alleged corruption in the Armed Forces during a press conference with civil society members.

The court-martial for these officers has been "inexplicably delayed," according to Pichay. "A clear indictment" of the military justice system is what he calls the discrepancy between the two cases.

Indeed, the discrepancy between the confinement of the general confined to quarters (for unexplained wealth) and the capitulus to solitary confinement in a maximum-security prison (for crying corruption) is glaring in this country of glaring discrepancies. But is anyone still paying attention?

Plug tax leaks first before raising taxes

As I See It

Neal H. Cruz

THE HOUSE of Representatives has passed the bill increasing the "sin taxes," but the wise men are stymied equally. Tobacco was taxed much higher than double. Even senior senator Sen. Ralph Recto said the tax hike "should not put the entire excised area of cheer time by the tax system. The wages of sin should be taxed."

Compare the tax load on the two sin products:

For every 91 cigarette sale, almost 40 centavos goes to tax. Last year, out of gross tobacco sales of P90.6 billion, P36.4 billion went to the Treasury in excise tax, thru-and.

But for every peso paid for gin, rum, brandy and whisky, only 14 centavos goes to tax. Last year, out of gross sales of P16.7 billion of distilled spirits, only P1.78 billion was paid in taxes.

And in the case of cigarettes, shouldn't we plug the tax leaks first before raising taxes again? Because of the high price of cigarettes due to high taxes, smuggling is rampant. Increase the taxes some more and smuggling will also increase.

Last year, we lost P6.0 billion in revenues through smuggling, according to Rep. Amy Marcos. He said cigarettes are able to escape taxes through Bureau 123 of the tax code that exempts cigarettes and liquor from excise taxes if these are consumed in duty-free shops. In short, this is one form of "legalized smuggling."

Subsidy and that is the idea of excise taxes is to penalize consumption of products set high social and health costs. It does not apply to cigarettes, whose cost to society does not correlate. Cigarettes brought in through Clark, Subic and the Southern Tagalog are those being smuggled into those trade and sold in the Philippines.

The Christmas season is also the season for reunions, and journalists, although aware of their making loans are spent chasing stories, are not spared this human yearning to see old friends and relive joyful times together. Even though competition among reporters is very keen during working hours, camaraderie takes over after deadline. Rooting is exceptionally strong among journalists. When journalism happens to work together, they usually join forces for life. And because many journalists work for different newspapers in the course of their careers, their friends are spread out not only in the industry but also in other fields, so many of them never see or talk to each other, except, by chance, on a plane, subway, gym, public restroom, etc.

Bi Jaime Mejico, veteran of different newspapers that have been closed by martial law are holding reunions this month and next. Most of them once work for other newspapers, but the call of old times is gentle and pulls them.

This Sunday, Nov. 14, alumni of the old Manila Chronicle (not to be confused with the new Manila Chronicle in the same way that the old Manila Times should not be confused with the new Manila Times) will reunite for lunch at Casa Roman, off Roxas Marquis Avenue, Quezon City. The host is Marian Pedrosa Bellosillo, who was a young police reporter of the Chronicle back when JJ Aldaregoy, domestic Malay and Cesar Cabrera were its top columnists.

On Nov. 28, it will be the turn of the veterans of the Philippine Free Press to get together for dinner at the Bonfills, Quezon City residence of Rolando Bonfills, who was its managing editor before he joined Philippine Airlines as vice president for corporate communications.

And on Dec. 5, the alumni of The Evening News, which used to be the No. 3 newspaper back in the 1950s until a labor strike closed it down, will have their own. Evening News (the replacer it), will have their dinner reunion at the Bonfills' Retiro in Legaspi Village, Makati. Melody Sonico-Dreslin, who was one of its dockgirls when I was its managing editor and she was, surrounded by the most beautiful, elegant and bright young girls in Philippine journalism then (among them, Julie Yap, Bobbie Malay, Carmen Hernandez, Minnie Monserrat, Mona Cattil), is hosting the dinner. Carmen, who is now residing in the United States, is coming home just for the occasion.

On Nov. 20, the Ateneo reunion will be held at the Manila Hotel for the alumni of the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters (Phillets) and the Faculty of Arts and Letters (Artsies) of the University of the Visayas. Most of the present newspaper organizations are staffed with graduates of Phillets and Artsies. The two colleges were combined into one before years ago.

And on Nov. 27, Samahang Plaridel, the mass communication organization of the top journalists in the country, will inaugurate its piano bar and clubhouse on the first and third floors of the Scanlon's Life building at the corner of Gen. Luna and Scanlon streets, where all the leading Filipino journalists and hotshots, Marcelo H. del Pilar and Teodoro M. Kalaw. President Macapagal-Arroyo has been invited to be guest of honor.

Journalists are invited to all the above-mentioned reunions.

The Plaridel clubhouse and piano bar, named The Print Pages, are designed to be the watering hole of journalists, a place to relax after work in Makati. There is dining, drink, fine food and essential company on the first floor, and a lounge with a reading room, piped-in mood music, a billiard room, its own kitchen and another bar, television sets, chess sets and an office with computers on the third floor.

Plaridel is also erecting a seven-foot statue of Del Pilar, a joint project with Manila Mayor Lito Atienza, at the Children's Park on Ill. Hundred Street in Makati. The bronze statue is being sculpted by well-known sculptor Julie Lluch. Plaridel is now overlooking a land drive for the monument. Similito's is for a site grocer this Christmas to gift Del Pilar with a donation for his monument.

It's time for a new nationalism

PASSION FOR REASON

Raul C. Pangalangan

JUSTICE Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., in his famous dissent in Lochner v. New York, rejected the constitutionalization of economic orthodoxies, deferring to the power of elected policymakers, and declining for activist courts to judge its set economic policy. "This case is decided upon an economic theory which a large part of the country does not entertain. (Whether or not I agree) with [Lassez faire] theory ... has nothing to do with the right of the majority to embody their opinions in law. [A] constitution is not intended to embody a particular economic theory."

Also, the drafters of the 1987 Philippine Constitution did not just reject old policy. They simultaneously rejected allegiance to both American and Latin. Striking down as anti-monopoly law, our Supreme Court invoked constitutional dogma: "In most cases, no school of scholars can claim any infallibility. Statutes ... have theoretical ... the dogmas of many scholars upon the fall of our economic dogma after another. (Thus,) the Court did not review the wisdom of (the 60 industry designations Law) but to investigate only its constitutionality."

The other day, the European Chamber of Commerce petitioned a legal opinion by our Department of Justice that would push big investments out of the Philippines. DOJ Opinion No. 40 imposed on international airbridge forwarders, like federal express, DHL and UPS, the nationality requirements under the 1987 Constitution, reversing long-standing DOJ rulings that they are not covered as "indirect air carriers." In one fell swoop, the DOJ has stated away investments, and nullified about 10 years of trade law and investment road plans have adopted.

But the critics: "The biggest problem for investors in the Philippines is not the law or the Constitution. It's the literal, shifting and often self-serving interpretation of law which continues to create havoc on the investment climate." Thus the DOJ, I suppose, is trying to do some improvement on those US Fought "conglomerate" offering "door-to-door" delivery of the Filipino dream?

"Given our Constitution's announced (by "clarifying") to the constitutional level (a) plethora of laws," to be "more parsimonious" in the use of words and "less confusing."

When a Malaysian company won the bidding for the Manila Hotel, the Supreme Court allowed the losing Filipino bidder to match the winning bid (see box). Thus is, after the winning bid had been opened and announced. The Court, in the Constitutional sense, gives "preference to qualified Filipinos" in the "grant of rights, privileges and concessions."

When Taiwanese investors wanted to take over a petrochemical plant from Boracay in Batangas, the Court said no, invoking the Constitution's goal of "a self-reliant and independent national economy effectively controlled by Filipinos."

But the SC can also deliver the example of the Supreme Court, which has shown that the text of the Constitutional can be reconciled with the imperatives of a changed world. When the "national treatment" and "parity provisions" of the WTO Agreement were challenged for violating the Filipino Flies-Cannot-the Cases and that "Filipinos first" policy, the Court said "national treatment" and was "a matter between the elected policy makers and the people, (and) that our people should determine in electing their policy makers ... (on the people, through their duly authorized elected officers, make their free choice."

The 1987 Constitution has thrown into place the notion of nationalism. The old Filipino First policy assumed that we are a monolithic nation. That may have been believable during the Cold War, when no one would say that what was good for the Philippines was good for the entire nation, but the one who said, "What is good for General Motors is good for the United States."

The Cold War is over, and the new Filipino First policy that first set side. Which Filipinos? My vote goes to the workers. The first time I see long white-uniformed women line the factory loft in the afternoon of the OKS edition.

Comments to raul.pangalangan@up.edu.ph

GMA has battle fatigue

ANALYSIS

Amando Doronila

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo has received a series of damaging blows during the past few days from three international institutions which stood up to laud her claim that the Philippines was headed for a "turnaround" in its fiscal deficit crisis.

The rampant of international caution was carried over to her meetings in media interviews in last week that the administration was containing the crisis from further spilling over or in the "larger economic and political arena."

It would not be long-or until it awaits," she said.

Contrary assessments came in rapid succession from the international credit rating institution, Moody's Investor Service, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. Moody's warned of a possible debt downgrade on the country's credit rating "in view of limited prospects for a fundamental turnaround in revenue performance and the attempt for a long-foreign interest rate environment, which by their location the expenditure side of the budget," meaning a downgrade would add to borrowing costs.

The report followed shortly the President's statement, which was echoed by her budget secretary, that the government needs a Surplus General government revenue as a measure of the crisis.

The statements shows her to have to her good sense, it shows she has been struck by battle fatigue. Mrs. Arroyo has been struck by battle fatigue. Mrs. Arroyo has been struck by battle fatigue. She has not the heart to dent the deficit gap. The consequence is that the crisis has lost its sense of urgency to the business community and congress.

Moody's report tallied attention to the administration's failure to meet revenue targets, which was followed by the promised will not push through Congress in eight key revenue enhancing and tax reform measures. Warnings by government against non-legislation urgently needed revenue measures are beginning to be perceived as a difficulty threat. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's electoral victory earlier this year and the campaign-time majority position in congress.

The IMF and the World Bank echoed Moody's assessment. IMF officials, who were tracking the progress of the government's tax reform efforts in its half-month review of the Philippine economy expressed on Bangko Sentral Governor Rafael Buenaventura that they were looking for "substance." "What they are looking for really are re-establishment," Buenaventura explained.

From the point of view of enhancing economic growth, World Bank country director Andrew Steer Ambong said at the launch the other day of its East Asia and Pacific Region update that the government needed to immediately implement fiscal reform measures. "In the short term, implementation of fiscal infrastructure will have a contagion effect on investor confidence," he said.

To a briefing, Isidro Sandalo, Pinoy Bank vice president for East Asia and the Pacific said, "Fiscal reform must be the No. 1 priority of the government if it is to address the difficult fiscal challenges facing the country today." He added that "a strong political will and unique consensus" from all sectors of the community would be critical if the debt burden is to be reduced."

Moody's noted that budget financing "relies largely on external borrowing, the stability of which could be threatened by an exchange rate shock or shift in creditor confidence," adding that the "lack of progress is structural reform. In the energy sector has contributed to the continued rise in fiscal public-sector deficit."

Moody's warning was the government's financial managers scampering for measures to head off a credit downgrade. It downgrade would result in higher borrowing cost for the country and for private corporations.

A Moody's team is arriving next month to evaluate progress in countering the deficit in the implementation of its critical economic report. Businessmen said Moody's would watch whether the country could achieve fiscal milestones. "But if they don't see any milestones, I suppose we will be downgraded."

Buenaventura noted that the country was already paying a higher premium for a possible downgrade. A Moody's Manila representative said Moody's would review the measures of at least three to six months. Moody's has already granted an "milestones" of political capacity in order to come out on its positions, via seminars and the so-called "macro-investors spaces," which aims to win budgetary expenses and economic management.

Of the eight urgent revenue-supporting measures that make up the President's fiscal reform package, the administration has narrowed to three-to-smallest it seeks to push for approval. The eight even this modified target, only the "big" ones till is likely to be enacted. Nearly six months after the President's inauguration, the IMF is still a half-measure. They the House of Representatives never convened has not convened, and this session has scattered down the hill's provisions to increase the excises and to their increases in the inflation rate.

Even if the three measures were passed, its enactment would not be sufficient to avert a credit downgrade. A single tax bill is not even a "basket" of which the administration can use to claim the country to pass the crisis mark.

The administration now needs to blame Congress for quickly for the meager accomplishments in reform legislation. Finance Secretary Juanita Amatong said the executive could only "propose but it is congress that disposes."

It is a fact that the President gained political capital from her election, but she has not spent it to carry out her fiscal reform agenda. The President's insistence that she focus only to vote is not fully persuasive, especially when it is backed by her lackluster performance in the campaigning completion.

The de-skilling of our young

PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

A STRANGER night you couldn't imagine. One of my sons woke up one morning to find her helper out in the garden, watering the plants. Nothing extraordinary there, except that the helper was struggling, trying to handle the water hose with one hand while using the other to keep an umbrella to keep her head.

My son asked why she had an umbrella and got this reply: "Because, madam, it is raining."

Stories of domestic helpers' foibles are a dime a dozen, but this one of watering the garden in the rain, with an umbrella, runs against the grain of ordinary. My son lamented, "The day the arrived, the dumb is a point so tell me she had done a year of college and was well qualified. But, Mike, I'm finding that we're getting more of these younger helpers who have finished high school or done a bit of college than any of the very few who do either more who may have only finished Grade 3."

College but de-skilled

It's a point well made about a growing problem we have among young people in general, whether they are true labor force or economic helpers, factory workers or office clerks. Educational attainments may be increasing, thanks in part to free public secondary education, but we have to be asking ourselves if the high school or even college diploma really means someone is prepared to meet life's challenges.

My view is that we're witnessing a massive, and dangerous, de-skilling of young people. Even if it comes to practical skills, many youth have turned their backs on the land, and on traditional work, including household basics, seeing all this as menial work. Urban youth are bedeviled into the information revolution, but their skills are limited to texting and managing computer games. Subsequently, we see a generation that is unprepared for anything.

The de-skilling of our young is probably worse with males because they are so privileged at home—for their mothers, nannies, girlfriends and wives. The other day one Ateneo professor told me she is particularly hard on her Central Luzon provincial students, which she says, when they arrive at really cool palaces or mansions used for their host. I'm being frivolous, of course, when I say that one of the skills being lost among men is pakwan cracking. There are far more important skills they're losing, as it is not surprising to find, especially in urban households, that males are not doing the household chores, while many of the females, jobless or not, who can't find work and who are not very gainful workers at home.

Just to be more conscious, I'll share with you the story of a male college students who was working for someone part-time as an all-around (that 30-day). One day, his employer told him they were going to meet an important business person. The employer then asked the student to get flowers and, explaining that the kitchen frame goes into the pots and then gets covered with soil. After words, the curious employer went to check on the pots and found they were filled with kitchen waste...still in plastic bags. Even more shocking was that out in the garden, there was a pile of garbage. Clearly, the student was not even presently explaining he had done this to loosen the compost production, with the compost going directly to the trees.

Common sense?

Mind you, this was a GP graduate who had grown up in a mid-sized city but had no idea of how plants grow, how organic matter decomposes, and so, I guess, there was no common sense as well.

Common sense isn't inculcation, it has to be acquired, and we're not doing enough to cultivate this behavior in school. Study I think it's because our problems from become so distanced, now more and more urban people, even middle-class mills so they can be exposed to trouble-free hassled work.

Parents urge their kids to finish high school so they can work abroad and earn dollars. The kids in turn see all the returning overseas workers, including the japanese, using the latest models of cell phones and electronics and watches and schools' wishes. I'm thrown into a quandary when I see young girls in middle-class and urban-poor areas in Quezon City, where I'm doing research, tell me, "We go to college when you can't get to Japan with a high school diploma?"

Indeed. Young urban girls do pick up skills, so survive in the new economy, to be salty and charming. And the next? It could be worse.

In my research, I found one young male whose wife was working in Japan while he was jobless, having off his remittances. He had two of the latest cell phones—and a motorcycle.

Initiative, initiative!

Let's get back to Isidro who was seen watering the plants in the rain. His employer had another observation: "I have to say that with this new crop of helpers, they are least aware of how to dress, much less behave. Why, once, a helper was off on a errand in London as a private girl's school."

What we're seeing here in the urbanite complex, in the Philippines, "schools" is used as a term of contempt and dislike, not to a rich institute, and "school" refers to their daughters. Being "schooled" means dressing up, or using manners that are not the norm—like, even in Japan, a person's voice which is all fine, except that being a scholar one means a disdain for work, especially work considered menial.

In Thailand, in Indonesia and in Vietnam, I find more women driving motorcycles, carrying around heavy loads—work that is considered by males to be distinctly degrading, "feminine" and swell, "an enforcer."

I've written before pan ama can more coming to be scholars, but I'm now convinced we are afflicted as well with an underlust for scholars, and unfortunately, we are this even in the poorest households, which means that children are not encouraged to be scholars, which means that children are not encouraged to be scholars, which means that children are not encouraged to be scholars

A boy scout's honor

LETTERS

AT A TIME when the Filipinos' trust in the sincerity of government officials seems to be fading, at a time when people are losing hope in the country's future because of irregularities in high places, we feel honored to know that Ombudsman Simeon Marcelo is thinking of tapping the services of the boys and girls in the scout movement to fight graft and corruption. (PDI, 10/25/04)

The good Ombudsman is moving toward the right direction. Just recently, hundreds of boy scouts and girl scouts worked side by side with the Department of Education and other civic organizations in checking the quantity of the textbooks delivered to different public schools in different parts of the country. These boys and girls, assisted by their scoutmasters, counted each book and made sure that they were delivered in good reading condition and on time.

Truly, the Boy Scouts of the Philippines is humbled to hear this heartening news, which gives credit to the countless men and women who labor hard to provide non-formal education to the boys in their formative years, teaching them the art of discipline through play and brotherhood, and inculcating in them the moral values of the scout movement.

The first point of the Scout law says "A Scout is trustworthy," an edict that seems to have been forgotten by many of our countrymen. A boy who grows up in scouting learns to follow this rule from his mentor, who nurtures him and moulds his character so that he will become a useful citizen and a conscientious leader in the future.

Scouting history is replete with stories of self-sacrifice and heroism, and of loyalty and service to country and people. From time to time, we hear people suggesting that scouting can be used as a catalyst for change and as a partner of our government in nation-building.

For 68 years, we have tried to make our presence felt in every home, in every school, in every community and in the world. Over the years, we have been helping the government in various programs and projects benefiting the community.

Many scouts have offered their lives in times of war and peace. Many of them served without thought of any reward. They served not because they were told, but because they made this promise: "On my honor, I will do my best," for God and country. In their young and uncorrupted minds, service was a way of life; they did not seek any reward but self-fulfillment.

But although we take pride in every word of praise heaped upon the movement and our members, we are saddened to note that the good Ombudsman can no longer trust the people we elected to take care of our country. If the Ombudsman deems us worthy of the trust, we are ready to accept his challenge for the Boy Scouts of the Philippines, an organization of young boys, to take an active part in the fight against corruption.

—J. RIZAL C. PANGILINAN,
secretary general,
Boy Scouts of the Philippines,
National Office, Ermita, Manila

'Jueteng' as tool for prosperity?

MUCH has been said about *jueteng*. Almost every day we hear or read about it on radio and in newspapers.

The Catholic Church seems to be divided on the issue. One bishop favors its legalization.

Much of the opposition stems from their belief that *jueteng*, or any form of gambling for that matter, offers the people, especially the poor, a false sense of hope and could in fact drive them deeper into poverty.

If we could turn *jueteng* from just being a form of gambling to a more productive endeavor which could uplift the lives of the poor, we might yet convince the Church to drop its opposition to the legalization of *jueteng*.

At this point, I would like to weigh in my two cents' worth of suggestions:

Let Congress legalize *jueteng*. The Philippine Charity and Sweepstakes Office or another body to be created by Congress shall be tasked to run its operations. Part of the proceeds or the "tax" from *jueteng* will be used for operational expenses. The rest of the money, after deducting the winnings, will be channeled to a foundation (either existing or created by Congress). The board of trustees of the foundation shall be composed of persons of proven integrity and probity. The Church , Department of Social Welfare and Development, and the Poverty Alleviation Commission shall have representatives in the board.

The foundation shall be tasked to identify, in coordination with the DSWD and civic organizations in a locality, the needs of the people in that particular locality. For example, in Pampanga where *jueteng* is believed to be active, the needs of the poor starting with the poorest barangay shall be identified by the foundation. These needs may be in the form of lack of potable water, lack of classrooms, scholarships for poor but deserving students, lack of text books, lack of roads, livelihood projects, health centers, etc. The proceeds from *jueteng* in Pampanga shall be used solely to address the needs of the people in Pampanga. In other words, use the people's own money to improve their lives. In the process of addressing the needs of the people in the area (the lack of classrooms, etc.), jobs will also be generated.

The operation of the foundation shall be subject to audit by a reputable auditing company. Twice a year, the foundation shall publish in newspapers their accomplishments.

If these suggestions are done, *jueteng* will cease to be a form of gambling; it will become an instrument for improving the lives of the poor.

—ERNIE ADAYA,
Felix Avenue, Cainta, Rizal

Headed toward another martial rule?

THE CONSTITUTION provides that civilian authority is, at all times, supreme over the military. The Armed Forces of the Philippines is the protector of the people and the state.

Is civilian authority still supreme over the military or are we slowly militirizing civil government? Does the AFP really protect the people when retired generals are appointed to key government posts? Must the House inquiry into military corruption be muzzled? These are ponderous questions for President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Historically, our military is almost always able to get what it wants.

During the time of President Ramon Magsaysay, the sudden increase in the number of Huk attacks before budgetary hearings enabled the military to ask for huge allocations, hence, the term "budgetary Huks."

During President Marcos' martial law years, the military reigned supreme. What a blow it must have been to career military professionals when a driver-relative of Marcos was designated AFP chief of staff. Protectors became predators. Their esprit de corps sadly speaks of the inability of the military—including graduates from the Philippine Military Academy—to cleanse its ranks.

The tenure of another military leader, President Fidel Ramos, seems to continue through the administration of President Arroyo which relies heavily on retired generals. Gen. Angelo Reyes, AFP chief of staff of President Joseph Estrada, became Ms Arroyo's defense secretary and now heads the Department of Interior and Local Government, a traditionally civilian enclave. He personified military arrogance before the House committee investigating military corruption. Retired generals abound in the Arroyo administration. Even the post of the executive secretary, the gateway to the Office of the President, is occupied by a military man. Are there no capable civilian officials or are we hostage to a military mind-set?

Many thinking citizens now suspect that the peace and order problems of our country will always be with us simply because the Moro National Liberation Front, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, the Abu Sayyaf and the New People's Army are convenient pawns in the "game of the generals." Without the insurgents, military participation in civil governance will become unnecessary.

Is it not embarrassing that it takes the United States to expose corruption in the military? Do we still have some gutsy leaders who can restore civilian supremacy over the military? Will the AFP top brass protect the people instead of manipulating them? Are we headed toward another martial regime?

—FRUCTUOSO SUZARA,
executive director,
Social Policy Advocacy
and Research Consultants,
15 Charleyville, White Plains, QC

'Veg-friendly newspaper'

THANK you for featuring the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (Peta) and the cause for animal rights.

The INQUIRER is one of the most "veg-friendly" newspapers in the country. It provides readers with an objective, non-biased and informed point of view about vegetarianism and animal rights.

—ERICK FABIAN,
info@tictiger.tk

We do not provoke the police

WE, of the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas, would like to clarify some points in Conrado de Quiros' Oct. 26 column.

First, the police did indeed try to disperse our rally at the Welcome Rotunda last Oct. 21, but they were not successful in doing so. We were able to start and end our program peacefully despite police attempts to provoke a fight that would have scuttled the rally. It seems that their plan was to sow chaos to divert the issue from the rightful demands of peasants for land and food, and for President Macapagal-Arroyo's ouster.

Second, as a matter of policy, we do not provoke the police; some pseudo-progressive groups may do that, but not us.

Our "March Against Landlessness, Hunger and Poverty" is a testament to the growing isolation of the Arroyo administration from the masses, particularly the peasantry that comprises 75 percent of the population. Indeed, the people are getting restive with the continuing deterioration of their livelihood, and the Arroyo administration is only aggravating it.

—CARL ANTHONY ALA,
public information officer,
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17-D Kasing-kasing St., Kamias, Quezon City

Across the NATION

Assistant Editor Tony Hargrove

Camarines folk to get 10,000 food coupons

PILI, Camarines Sur—Amid the continuing increase of prices of basic necessities, the government agencies here involved in the Arroyo administration's program for the poor, the Kadiwa, are to start distributing 10,000 food coupons to the same number of poor families in the province this month.

Committee Sec is among the five provinces the Arroyo administration identified for the initial implementation of the program to supplement the daily subsistence of the poorest of the poor in the country amid the economic crisis.

The other four provinces that the Department of Social Welfare and Development identified as the first batch of recipient provinces of the food coupon distribution program included Eastern Samar, Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao and Sulu.

Bernardo Sorter, manager of the National Food Authority in Camarines Sur, said that together with the Department of Trade and Industry, the grains agency has already been tasked with identifying commodity outlets where the 10,000 food coupons could be exchanged.

And to said that a food coupon is worth P1,200 comprising of a set of 12 coupons denominated into P100 each that the beneficiaries could exchange for selected commodities in participating outlets.

He said the government guidelines have identified rice, cooking oil, mongo beans, eggs, dried fish, sugar, sardines, noodles, milk and other "fortified food brands" as the only commodities the beneficiaries would exchange with the food coupon. Joel Escander A., PIA Southern Luzon Bureau

4-day holiday in ARMM declared

COTABATO CITY—Workers in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) will enjoy a four-day holiday after Eid Nawah Husain declared Nov. 12 a non-working holiday to be copied.

"Declaring Friday, Nov. 12, a non-working holiday in the ARMM would give ample time to Muslim faithful to prepare for the big feast ending month-long fasting and sacrifices," Hussin said.

President Macapagal-Arroyo has declared Nov. 11 as a nationwide non-working holiday because of the Eid'l Fitr although the festivity would actually take place on Saturday.

Hussin cited Presidential Decree 1083 that recognized Eid'l Fitr as the end of the fasting season observed by Muslim worldwide as a non-working holiday as the basis of his declaration.

Undersecretary Zenaprin Amputuan, executive director of the Office of Muslim Affairs, has called on all Muslims in the country to examine what they have done for the past month.

"The 30-day fasting gave us the opportunity to submit ourselves to what God wanted us to be. We handled the temptations and the earthly desires, let us continue doing so," he said. Edwin O. Fernandez, PIA Mindanao Bureau

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CORRUPTION SUSPECTED

Pampanga quarry revenue falls

MEXICO, Pampanga—Only ₱9.9 million or half of the year's target revenues from Pampanga's quarry industry had been collected as of October, and one of the options to improve collections include getting the job out of the hands of the task force under the command of Gov. Mark Lapid.

"We are in a serious situation and this definitely requires serious answers," Vice Gov. Joaquin Bruno, presiding officer of the provincial board, said after pointing out that the ₱20-million target could not be reached until December.

Bruno said the provincial board has prepared several measures to raise additional money for next year's ₱971 million budget.

These include installing an on-truck user monitoring system for the collection, monitoring checks and balances in the old monitoring system or bidding out new rights for quarry sites.

It is the first option that might enable the board to take a closer supervision of the cash from their Lapid friends.

According to Cotias, the provincial government must put more hands into the capitol's coffers so it could provide more social services amid increasing operational costs that strain local resources.

Lapid, he said, was himself very disappointed with the way the collections was going. The governor, he added, admitted it was difficult to meet the target due to alleged irregularities in the field.

Asked what caused the fall in quality revenues, Cotias cited inefficiency by the provincial treasurer's office and negligence by the collectors.

Between 3,000 and 3,000 trucks hauling sand out of Pampanga daily, various estimates showed. Lapid, however, said the provincial government could raise between ₱16.8 million and ₱20.2 million monthly with this number of trucks.

The ₱9.9 million collected by the provincial government from January to October this year means that only less than 750 trucks hauled sand out of Pampanga daily within that period. The capitol collects a tax of ₱500 per truckload of sand.

Bruno said there have no solid proof of claims that alleged corruption attended the cash from's collection work since the term of the governor's father, Sen. Manuel Lapid.

Before the provincial government assumed control of the sand industry through two court orders, the state-owned Natural Resources Development Corp. collected ₱1,569.46 million in 1999 from at least 509,800 truckloads of sand.

Quarry taxes dropped to ₱1.9 million in 2002 and to ₱6.9 million in 2003, reports obtained by the Inquirer showed. — Beverly Dreyan, PDI Central Luzon Desk

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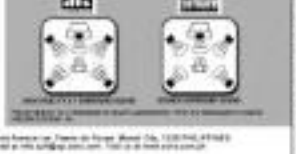

DISPATCH

A monster cyclone the returns to Zamboanga City redressing her departure from Gabriela, now a Malaysian state where the Philippine government has learned a crackdown on at least 3,000 Filipinos who were searching for a better future.

Cebu importer of drugs sued

By Joana S. Bulambot
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—The Bureau of Customs yesterday filed criminal charges against the alleged consignee of the 1,790 kilos of pseudoephedrine, a precursor in the manufacture of shabu, which was worth about ₱13.9 billion.

Mike Cummings of Guanzon Venturas Inc. (GVI) was charged with violations of the Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act and of the Tariff and Customs Code of the Philippines.

District Collector Billy Inbo filed the complaint against Cummings at the Cebu City Prosecutor's Office, about eight months after the shipment was seized.

Cummings has been in hiding since the shipment was seized in March. Police have yet to determine his whereabouts as he is nationally although it has received reports that he could either be in Antarctica or in Australia.

Inbo said this was the first case filed by collector since Customs Commissioner Guillermo Arroyo delegated the power to file cases against suspected smugglers to the district collectors.

Elements of the Bureau of Customs, the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency, the police and the National Bureau of Investigation seized 60 drums of pseudo-ephedrine on board SKY Ines Blue on March 1, 2004 upon its arrival at the Cebu port. The estimated value of the seized precursor was ₱13.9 billion.

In his complaint-affidavit, Inbo said the vessel's alleged foreign consignor listed the consignee of the shipment as Cummings of GVI with an address at Unit E, 7/F, King Warehouse Plaza, Herman Gotiao St., Mandaue City.

He said his office conducted an investigation but they could not locate Cummings. The consignee also did not come forward to claim the shipment, he added.

Three staff members of former Cebu Vice Gov. John Gregory Osmeña were linked to the GVI after their names appeared in GVI's investment papers as officers.

De Oro power firm found overcharging

CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY—The Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) admitted that the Cagayan de Oro Power and Light Company (Cepalco) has been overcharging its consumers.

ERC Commissioner Oliver Bendaña told the Sangguniang Panlungsod on Monday that Cepalco's approved generation charge under the unbundling of rates was only ₱1.99 per kilowatt hour (kWh), but the electric company has been collecting ₱2.46 per kWh since July.

The ERC has been investigating the new Cepalco rate in the wake of complaints that power firm has implemented a steep increase in surcharges.

Bendaña's appearance was in connection with the investigation.

Councilor Benjamin Bendaño told the hearing that Cepalco has been overcharging consumers by about ₱6.49 per kWh.

"This is too much already for consumers like us," he said.

Bendaño said in his case, Cepalco already owed him ₱723 since July, when the new rate was implemented.

"This is just my residence bill. How many are paying for Cepalco's excess every month?" he said.

In the wake of Bendaño's admission about Cepalco's overcharging, the SP passed a resolution asking the ERC to issue a cease and desist order against the power firm's implementation of higher rates.

The city council also wanted Cepalco to refund consumers of the overcharged amount.

"This is an injustice to the people, who, right now, are wallowing in financial difficulties due to the perennial oil price hike and the calamities," Bendaño said. — Gryan Cordial-Alfaro, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Malaysian exec to visit MILF, ceasefire team

DAVAO CITY — Malaysian Defense Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak will visit Cotabato City, the Moro Islands Liberation Front said yesterday.

Eid Kabalu, MILF spokesperson, said Najib, who is also deputy prime minister, would visit members of the Malaysian team monitoring the ceasefire between the government and the MILF.

Kabalu said Najib was expected to arrive "either on Eid'l Fitr (Nov. 15) or shortly after it."

Eid'l Fitr marks the end of the fasting month of Ramadan.

The Bernama News Agency, Malaysia's official state bureau, said Najib would also talk with government and MILF representatives during his visit.

Kuala Lumpur is serving as a third country mediator between the government and the MILF.

"The ceasefire in southern Philippines is holding which means the two sides are honoring it and so supporting the role of our military personnel," Bernama quoted Najib as saying.

Kabalu said he has no idea yet as to what Najib would be taking up with representatives from both sides.

Allyn N. Serrano, PIR Mindanao Bureau

Rats destroy P83M in Sarangani crops

By Aquiles Zaide
PIA Mindanao Bureau

GLAN, SARANGANI — Rodents destroyed at least P83 million worth of agricultural products in Sarangani province, a provincial official said.

Fernando Lanuza, provincial coordinator, said the figure represented the damage brought by rats from November 2003 until September this year.

Lanuza said the provincial government has already distributed rodenticides to seven towns affected by the infestation.

Of the seven towns affected by rodents, Malapatan was reportedly the one which suffered severe damage.

Lanuza, whose office participated in distributing aid to affected farmers, said the infestation was monitored in all ranges of corn, palay and root crops planted in the affected areas.

Agriculture officials said a sharp increase in the rat population in the province was first monitored early October last year.

This, they said, was triggered by erratic weather condition in the area.

Dodi Salve, rodents – reportedly thrive well during the onset of the dry season.

To contain the infestation, the provincial government launched an anti-rat campaign dubbed "Bounty Hunt, Bigas Ko." Farmers who present 10 tails of rats would be given a kilo of milled rice.

Death of Yasser Arafat marks end of an era

Front page 1

HUMOR opens a door to peace. Then Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak (right) shares brusha, as a joke, into a cake on the grounds of Camp David with then-US President Bill Clinton during peace talks in July 2000. REUTERS/POOL/FILE

he is will among the great people," said senior Arafat aide Saeb Abdel Rahim, who broke into tears as he announced Arafat's death.

A wave of grief quickly swept across the West Bank and Gaza Strip. "He is Palestine."

Black masks and burning tires were set on the Gaza Strip, gunmen fired into the air in grief. Meanwhile, flags at Arafat's battered, sandpaled were lowered to half staff. Somber music played on the radio, church bells rang out, and funeral notices were placed for hundreds of mosque headquarters.

The Palestinian Cabinet declared 40 days of mourning for Arafat, said the Al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades in Gaza, a militant group linked to Arafat's Fatah movement, decided to change its name to the Martyr Yasser Arafat Brigades.

Fearing the grief could rapidly turn into rioting, Israel quickly moved to seal off the West Bank and Gaza Strip and increased security at Israeli settlements.

Arafat's health began deteriorating last month. Palestinian officials initially insisted he had a lingering case of the flu, but they grew increasingly concerned when he did not recover.

Never to return

He was rushed to France on Oct. 29 for emergency medical treatment, marking the first time in nearly three years he left his compound—where he had been held virtual prisoner by Israel. The image of the ailing leader being evacuated on a Jordanian helicopter convinced many Palestinians he would never return alive.

Funeral service in Cairo

Arafat's body is to be flown Thursday evening from Paris to Cairo, where a funeral service attended by foreign dignitaries will be held for him Friday morning. His body will then be flown by helicopter to his headquarters in the Ramallah compound known as a muqata for burial later in the day.

The Israeli military said all West Bank Palestinian would be allowed to attend, though they would have to pass through checkpoints. Only VIPs will be permitted to come from Gaza, a military source said, adding that Israel had information that terror groups would use the funerals to plan an attack.

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, who has shunned his longtime nemesis as a consuming terrorist and obstructionist, said his death "can serve as a historic turning point in the Middle East" and expressed hope the Palestinians would now seek to stop terrorism. In a sign of the enmity the two men shared even in death, Sharon refused to mention Arafat by name.

Nabil Shaath, the Palestinian foreign minister, called on Israel to resume implementation of the US-backed "road map" peace plan, saying Israel had used its dislike for Arafat as an excuse for avoiding obligations to withdraw from West Bank cantons. Israel says the Palestinians failed to meet their road map obligations to crack down on militants.

US President George W. Bush, who had also shunned Arafat, described his death as a "significant moment" in Palestinian history and expressed hope the Palestinians would achieve statehood and peace with Israel.

Chirac's eulogy

French President Jacques Chirac arrived at the hospital where Arafat was treated shortly after noon. Thursday to pay his last respects. He hugged Arafat's widow, Suha, before leaving.

Chirac eulogized Arafat as a "man of courage and conviction," but others were more measured, reflecting the vastly different images of the Palestinian leader.

As much of his life was filled with controversy, so too was Arafat's death.

Compromise burial site

The Palestinians had demanded he be buried in Jerusalem on the disputed holy site that once held the biblical Jewish temples and now holds Al Aqsa Mosque, Islam's third-holiest shrine.

Israel refused, fearing a Jerusalem burial would strengthen Palestinians' claims to a city they envision as a capital of a future Palestinian state.

In a compromise, the Palestinians agreed to bury him at his compound here, the presidential headquarters in Gaza, a military source said, adding that Israel had information that terror groups would use the funerals to plan an attack.

A visual contrast in his shrinking Ramallah headdress, Arafat kept the Palestinians' cause at the center of the Arab-Israeli conflict. But he left short of creating a Palestinian state, and, despite his reputation as a shrewd leader of his generation, he saw his influence weakened by the rise of radical Islam in recent years.

He shook hands at the White House with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin on a peace deal that formally recognized Israel's right to exist while granting the Palestinians limited self-rule in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The pact led to the 1994 Nobel Peace Prize for Arafat, Rabin and then-Foreign Minister Shimon Peres.

Peace accord unravels

But the accord quickly unravelled amid mutual suspicions and accusations of treaty violations, and a new round of violence that erupted in the fall of 2000 has killed some 4,000 people, three-quarters of them Palestinians.

The Israeli and US governments and Arafat dissolved much of the blame for the dwindling of the peace process. Even many of his own people forgot reluctant to go against Arafat, expressing disgruntlement over corruption, lawlessness and a bad economy in the Palestinian areas.

Born in Gaza or Cairo

A confusing carousel of facts with Israel, assassination attempts and even a plane crash, Arafat was born Abdulrahman Abdel Rauof Arafat Qudwa on Aug. 4, 1929, the birth of Arafat's mother in Palestine was mother killed in the 1948 war over Israel's creation. There is disagreement whether he was born in Gaza or in Cairo.

Educated as an engineer in Egypt, Arafat served in the Egyptian army and then studied a civil training firm in Kuwait. It was there that he founded the Fatah movement, which became the core of the PLO.

Also in Arafat's bumbling decade by Israel in the next day next of 1967, the PLO thrust itself on the world's front pages by sending its gunmen out to hijack airplanes, machine gun airports and seize hostages at the 1972 Munich Olympics. AP

The words turned . . .

Front page 1

allows for neither compromise nor moderation ... We don't want peace, We want war, victory."

1974—Addressing the United Nations General Assembly: "I have come bearing an olive branch and a freedom fighter's gun. Do not let the olive branch fall from my hands."

1980—"I am with the current of history and those with the current of history will win. Those against it will vanish."

1983—Commenting on the Israeli army after its 1982 invasion forced the PLO to flee Beirut: "By God, I have not found it darker life ... I wish all my enemies were with me to see the feebleness of this army."

1986—"Neither (I) nor anyone for that matter can stop the intifada (Palestinian uprising) ... The intifada will come to an end only when practical and tangible steps have been taken toward the achievement of our national aims."

June 14—"The Palestine National Council, in the name of God, and in the name of the Palestinian Arab people, proclaims the establishment of the state of Palestine on our Palestinian land, with Jerusalem as its capital."

Dec. 14—"(We accept) the right of all parties concerned with the Middle East conflict to exist in peace and security, including...as I said in my speech to Palestine, Israel and other neighbors to accordance with (UN) resolutions 242 and 338 ... We totally and categorically reject all forms of terrorism, including individual, group and state terrorism."

1991—On pressing Israel to agree to trade occupied land for peace, "We are not asking for the moon."

1992—After surviving a plane crash in the Libyan desert: "I'm well and thanks to all."

1993—At the Sept. 13 White House signing of historic peace accords with Israel: "Our people do not consider that exercising the right to self-determination could violate the right of their neighbors or infringe on their security. Neither, putting an end to their feelings of being wronged and of having suffered a historic injustice is the strongest guarantee to achieve coexistence and openness between our two peoples and foster genuineness. Our two peoples are meeting today this historic hope, and they seem to give peace a real chance."

1994—On historic homecoming to Gaza: "I am very happy but my heart was overwhelmed by coming to see the homeland."

—"The most important challenge for us is to build a new Palestinian Authority which will lead to a new independent state, a new democratic state."

1995—On the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin: "I am very sad and very shocked by this awful and terrible crime against one of the brave leaders of Israel and the peacemakers."

1996—On suicide bombings in Israel by Muslim militants: "We are condemning terror and we will confront terror and uproot it from our land because our dream of freedom, independence and self-determination would not prosper and be fulfilled until a sea of tears and blood, but with thorough work to condemn the terror of these enemies and dangerous wings from Hamas and (Islamic) Jihad."

—After the election of right-wing Benjamin Netanyahu as Israeli prime minister: "The Israeli people have voted against peace. They want peace with Jordanians, they want peace with Egyptians but they don't want peace with Palestinians."

—On the first anniversary of Rabin's assassination: "Shalom haver (farewell friend) in Hebrew. I take you."

1997—"With Rabin, I started the peace of the brave and many things were going smoothly, according to what had been agreed upon. But this (Netanyahu's) government, until now is not respecting the implementation of what has been signed."

—"We say that there can be no peace without Jerusalem and no peace with (Israeli) settlements."

1998—On Israel's 50th anniversary and the catastrophe which Palestinians said befell them when the Israelis state was born: "We have a plan under the sun."

—On a future state: "In accordance with the Oslo agreement, the interim period is five years, so it must end by May 4, 1999. By that day we can declare our independent Palestinian state."

—"If Netanyahu opposes this, let him drink the Dead Sea waters."

2000—On the possibility of dying under Israeli siege in Ramallah: "I am a Palestinian soldier ... I will use my gun to defend not only myself but also defend every Palestinian child, woman and man and to defend the Palestinian existence."

2004—On being airlifted in stretcher to France for urgent medical care after 2 1/2 years of confinement to West Bank headquarters by Israeli army: "God willing, I will come back." Reuters

P1-B lobby for 'sin' taxes

From page B1

Jerome Velasco, the chair of the House ways and means committee and the leadership all denied Evers' allegation.

"While we believe that these accusations are best answered by the House leadership and Mr. Evers' colleagues, our company stoutly categorically that we are not nuance of nor engaged in any form of lobbying in Congress or elsewhere," retired Lt. Gen. Salvador Mison, spokesperson of the Lucio Tan Group of Companies, said in a statement.

"If there is any lobbying, we believe that it is being done by certain vested interests which want to tax low-priced brands out of the market to favor smuggled goods or premium imported brands," Mison said.

He said Fortune had the highest respect for and faith in the legislative process. "We have it to the wisdom of both houses of Congress to craft the version they feel will raise the highest revenues without favoring certain constituents of the expense of others," he said.

Imputing malice

Sen. Jinggoy Estrada (NPC, Taytay), chair of the Senate ways and means committee, made exception to Evers' allegations. "Missing Evers is dismissing the institution of Congress," Lapus said.

"He is imputing malice not only to the House leadership and membership but also to the executive branch's economic team," Lapus said.

"Are the cigarette players manufacturers? Why shell out money for a bill that they will be paying for?" Lapus said rhetorically.

He pointed out that for the first year, the government expects to collect P7.8 billion from cigarette and alcohol product manufacturers, and P9 billion each year for the subsequent two years.

"That's P25 billion that they will shoulder," Lapus said.

Asked to describe the sentiments of Fortune Tobacco Corp. and Philip Morris Philippines Inc., the country's two major tobacco manufacturers, Lapus said: "They're happy and unhappy at the same time."

"If they had their way, they won't want any new taxes. It's just that President Macapagal-Arroyo asked them to help out in solving the fiscal crisis," Lapus said.

Outrageous

Richardson is not laughing about Evers' allegation.

"It's outrageous, I mean, if you were in [the] Congress with money like that, not only members of Congress but media practitioners would be able to smell it from 10 kilometers away," Presidential Political Adviser Gabriel Claudio said in a phone interview.

"I have neither felt nor seen any sign of such an illicit lobby," said Claudio, who also serves as the Presidential Legislative Liaison Office.

Claudio said Evers should volunteer as his whistleblower.

The usually patient Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin also could not contain her irritation. "Oh my God. That's too rare."

Boncodin asked not any lobby fund from the treasuries. For his part, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye simply said: "We don't want to jump."

Ten percent

Asked to estimate the money that went to the tobacco lobby, Evers said: "You just estimate. If you are a player, how much money are you ready for a tax increase of P9 billion?"

"If you say that you give away 10 percent [of P9 billion], that's P900 million to P1 billion. That would be the lobby money for one player," Evers said.

"If I am a businessman and if I need to have my own version approved, I'll be willing to give 10 percent," he said.

Evers said he got the Lucio Tan group, Evers said: "Had most of the Senate Tabacalera brands were reclassified, we could have collected P11 billion more."

With just 46 percent (as provided in HB 31741), we can collect only P2 billion," Evers said.

The Senate has yet to pass its version of the sin tax. The two chambers of Congress will have to reconcile their respective versions in a bicameral conference.

If I don't speak out during the hours, it would mean that I too had received [lobby money]," Evers said, laughing out loud.

Hard to believe

In the Senate, the ways and means committee points day concluded its deliberations on the proposed higher taxes on cigarettes and alcohol, with some Cabinet officials delaying that lobby money from cigarette makers has reached the chambers.

In the first place, Sen. Ralph Recto, chair of the committee, found the charge of Evers "hard to believe."

Recto said it was also "impossible" for lobby money to reach the Senate.

Senate President Franklin Drilon said finalizing the Senate with lobby money for the passage of an issue to the liking of cigarette makers was the "last thing cigarette manufacturers should do as far as the Senate is concerned."

"There is absolutely none," Drilon said as he noted that the confirmation of the committee hearings yesterday meant the Senate could deliberate on the floor by next week the tax proposal to be submitted by Recto's committee.

Recto said he refused to believe that Congress received lobby money because at yesterday's hearing the Department of Finance presented a new proposal on the excise tax for cigarettes that he considered as "executive in nature proposal."

Finance Undersecretary Ernest Pulido presented to the committee an "alternative structure" in which the executive proposed a combined percentage increase and unitary rate of 12 percent and P0.80, respectively, for the first year.

The tax hike for cigarettes would be 16 percent and P0.16 every two years until 2011 in lieu of inflation.

Harry Tan formula

But when Finance Undersecretary Grace Tan presented this alternative structure, Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile said the "formulation" was the one that Harry Tan, brother of the Fortune Tobacco owner, had presented at a meeting that Ma Arroyo had with cigarette manufacturers.

But DOF officials denied this. Enrile insisted later that the new formulation proposed by the DOF was from Fortune Tobacco. Told that the DOF had denied this, Enrile said: "I have the documents; it was given by Harry Tan to someone during the meeting."

Enrile said he would take this up on the floor when the Senate starts to deliberate on Recto's committee report.

Sharing tax burden

But analyzing the DOF presentation, Recto said that for him, Velasco and Cabral Philip Bunye apparently came together to share the tax burden. "Sus! Small fine the original position of Fortune was percentage increase while Philip Morris wanted a unitary tax increase," he told reporters.

He said what came out of the hearing was a "combination of both" [positions of Fortune and Philip Morris].

"What does that tell you?" Recto said. "What it tells me is that there is a compromise to burden sharing."

60-40

He said 60 percent of the tax would be shared by Fortune and 40 percent to be shared by Philip Morris, as presented by the DOF.

Recto asserted that the two biggest cigarette makers had agreed to share the tax burden so the former would pass the measure immediately.

The Department of Finance admitted that its new formula took into consideration the positions of major cigarette players.

Undersecretary Tan said in an interview that the new DOF proposal would yield P50 billion in the first seven years of implementation, while that of the House would generate P58 billion.

Asked why the DOF should take into consideration the position of the cigarette manufacturers in crafting its new formula, Tan said: "This is a democratic institution."

The DOF's new position differs from its original proposal of imposing a 30-percent increase in the tax rate in the first year of the law's implementation, and reducing the rates as collection every two years.

Tan said the DOF's new position also took into consideration time constraint.

The Arroyo administration is hard pressed to pass some of its fiscal measures, especially the alcohol and cigarette tax bill, before the end of the year.

Adopting a position that takes into consideration the proposals of cigarette players is expected to prevent opposition in the bill. With a report from Michelle V. Reyes

TERSE: BSP didn't speak out it would mean that I too had received money

LAPUS: Terse is destroying the institution of Congress.

IN THE KNOW

Lobby money old news in the House

LOBBY money refers to the spending done by interest groups to influence legislation.

In the House of Representatives, lobby money is criticized.

2002

- Manuel Lee Sandoz, a former National Food Authority administrator, chief accused President Macapagal-Arroyo of ordering him to distribute P4B million to members of the House for the passage of the Electric Power Industry Reform Act.

- Misbehaving said the allegations were just a rehash of old bribery charges which the Office of the Ombudsman had dismissed.

2000

- Representatives Renato Magtubo and Loretta Ann Rosales said they were given P500,000 after deliberating on the Omnibus Power Bill.

- House committee on economic chair Gloucester Jesus Madrona said the "allowances" were only P50,000 and not P500,000.

- Rogelio Ayuyao and Wahabbayan's Teodoro Casiño accused the House of lobbying on the National Oil Exchange Bill because of a powerful lobby having oil monopolies, saying: "The oil cartels are of the most powerful and well-financed lobby groups in the world."

1998

- Then House Speaker Manuel Villar said powerful groups in the oil and petroleum industry had raised a "lobby fund" to derail the passage of the Clean Air Act.

1997

- Several congressmen were accused of sharing P20 million for the quick passage of a bill granting a 15-year tax exemption to a gaming company, and were later cleared by their colleagues in the House committees on ethics and good government.

1996

- Then Rep. Michael Defensor came under fire for receiving the alleged P500,000 payoff to legislators for the P1.7-billion North Luzon Expressway rehabilitation.

1995

- Sen. Agapito Aquino denounced the "thousands of the logging lobby" which he said was behind a scheme to block the passage of the logging ban bill. PDI Research

Sources: PDI archives

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Petron hikes gasoline prices by P1/liter, diesel by 50¢/liter

From page B1

would still be able to control and increase prices again for the rest of the year, should world market prices suddenly surge in the coming weeks.

But based on the company's internal forecast, crude prices should stabilize soon, and the current oil prices should decrease fall to December.

"We've studied the numbers and figured that these are the numbers we can live with," she said. "We're committed to the locals. So whatever happens, we're committed."

Net income of at least P2.1B

She said Petron would still be able to meet its net income target of at least P2.1 billion this year, despite building off on any further increases after this one.

The benchmark Dubai crude has fallen to a November average of $35.66 a barrel from the October average of $37.16 a barrel.

The price of unleaded gasoline based on the Mean of Platts Singapore (MOPS) benchmark for refined petroleum products likewise went down in the first 10 days of November to $32.83 a barrel from $34.71 a barrel last month.

MOPS-based diesel dropped to $36.98 a barrel in the first 7-10 period from the October average of $38.40.

"The downward trend in global oil prices the past days is a welcome relief. We hope this continues," Energy Secretary Vincent Perez said.

He earlier appealed to several local firms, including Petron, for the implementation of just one last price increase for the rest of the year.

He declined to name the oil firms he had already pitted to touch with, saying only that he had been talking with several companies.

In reaction to Petron's current move, Perez said: "We are very pleased to hear that Petron has responded sensitive and listened to our appeal to temper the adjustments by half of what they were originally asking for. We are hoping that other oil companies would heed our call."

Other factors

Petron said Perez's appeal was not the primary reason Petron decided to commit to a final increase for the year. Other factors, like the projected fall in world oil prices, was the company's main consideration for the decision.

"We heard his appeal and took that into account. But we were already also considering what we now know will be even before he made the appeal," she said.

ENTERTAINMENT

Editor Louie C. Camino
Associate Editor Emerie G. Velarde

'Fahrenheit' shut out of Globes

LOS ANGELES—Organizers of the Golden Globes have barred the political documentary "Fahrenheit 9/11" from consideration for Hollywood's second most prestigious awards, the industry press said Tuesday.

But the Hollywood Foreign Press Association (HFPA) has embraced the other highly controversial film of 2004, Mel Gibson's religious epic "The Passion of the Christ," which can compete for best foreign-language film as it is filmed in Latin and Aramaic.

Daily Variety said Michael Moore's explosive film, which its hoped would turn voters away from US President George W. Bush ahead of next week's election, was ineligible as the HFPA does not recognize documentaries.

"So the fabulous [sic] 9/11 could be made to roll other documentaries that 'Fahrenheit' qualified and many didn't," HFPA president Lorenzo Soria told Reuters. "We follow our rules and it did not qualify. It would be unfair to make an exception."

The $35 million cost of the film that became the first documentary to win the Palme D'Or at the Cannes Film festival in May generated controversy saying they were disappointed by the HFPA's decision.

Some members had also proposed a special award for Moore, who is hoping the Bush-bashing "Fahrenheit" will be eligible for a best picture Oscar, but the motion was defeated in a meeting last week, Variety said.

But Gibson's "Passion" does qualify for the awards' foreign language section as it was filmed in the ancient languages of Aramaic and Latin, Soria said.

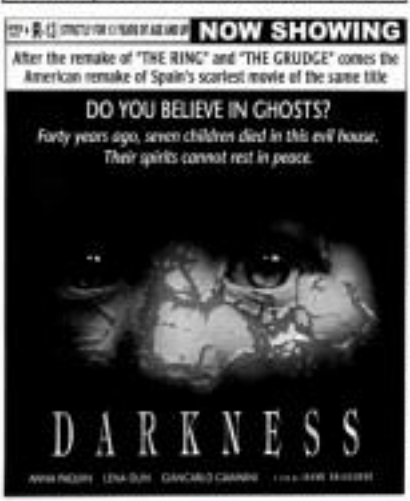
"We, we know Aramaic is not a spoken language and, yes, we know the film doesn't have a country of origin, but our bylaws state that when a film is in a language that is predominantly non-English, it's a foreign-language film," he said.

"Finished" tells the gory story of the last days of the life of Jesus Christ and was at the center of major controversy after the film opened in April to accusations that it was anti-Semitic and overly-violent.

But the film, which was privately financed by the devoutly-Catholic Gibson, was a huge success with audiences.

Oscars organizers refused to consider "Passion" for a best foreign language film award as those entries are submitted by territorial committees, not by producers.

The Golden Globes, which will be handed out on Jan. 16, are of increasing importance, not for the Oscars, nominations for which will be announced on Jan. 25. AFP

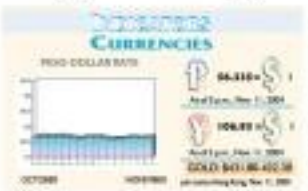


FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2004 PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER B1

BUSINESS

Edna Reoil D. Marcelo
Assistant Editor Corrie S. Mamaril

Expect higher consumer prices–Neda



By Michelle V. Rerea

THE NATIONAL Economic and Development Authority has called on the public to brace for even higher consumer prices amid December, as the increase in the cost of oil impacts on the prices of water, electricity and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG).

Neda said inflation for the full year is expected to average at 5.7 percent, or much higher than the government's target of 4 to 5 percent. But November and December, inflation is expected to shoot up to a five-year high of more than 6 percent due to increases in the cost of utilities.

Last October, inflation reached 7.1 percent, but the Neda says it is accelerating further in November and December because of a significant rise in the cost of some non-food items, which account for half of the consumer price basket.

"A higher inflation is something people should expect. What increases in the second semester of this year are also expected to be front-loaded in the first half of next year," Solidarity Governor, head of Neda's national planning and policy staff, said in a briefing yesterday.

The Neda official said inflation for 2005 was expected to be at least 7 percent, or much higher than the 4- to 5-percent target under the Arroyo administration's Medium Term Philippine Development Plan (MTPDP).

However, Neda Director General Romulo Neri said that was not advisable for the government to implement price control measures because such a move would only lead to market distortions and could even aggravate the high-inflation scenario.

He said what the government should do now is improve logistics and infrastructure to reduce

"When everything important to us is within reach, we know we've made the right decision."

Dr. Benjie Luna and daughter Ysobel
Ayala Westgrove Heights Homeowner

Growing up in the city, you simply get used to having everything within easy reach – schools, hospitals, shopping centers and public utilities. Everything is convenient and comfortable for you. That's why Benjie, a cardiologist, and his wife, Ginny, a flight attendant, initially had doubts of leaving their first home. But at the end of 2003, they decided to escape the squeeze that has intensified in their 3-bedroom condominium in Pasig City. More importantly, factories in the area have greatly contributed to the worsening air pollution. "We were really thinking of our daughters," Ginny said. "We want them to grow up in a cleaner, safer community."

That's always dreamed of living in a more natural environment. A place with plenty of trees, hills and wide open spaces where their children can freely roam around to play. But the thought of moving far from the familiar comforts of the city seemed impractical. Like many families, they have fallen into the "big city trap".

Then Benjie discovered Ayala Westgrove Heights through his daughter Ysobel's prep school principal. "He had just bought a lot and was so happy with his purchase," he said. Ayala Westgrove Heights, after all, is designed to be a self-contained community, similar to Ayala Alabang. All the necessary amenities are continuously being built around it: schools, hospitals, commercial centers, groceries, churches. Only 15 minutes away from Alabang, it is a sanctuary that does not isolate, but offers a chance to escape at the end of the day.

Inside, they are surrounded by lush mango groves and rolling hills. A cool climate is also perfect for outdoor family activities. Amenities like the garden clubhouse and children's playground are enough to keep them home for entire weekends. "My daughters used to miss our old place in the city. But that's not the case now. They love everything here... waking up to beautiful views, playing with birds and crickets and picking mangoes in our backyard," Ginny said.

The most important thing, of course, is the fact that it has the Ayala Land pedigree. After Ayala Alabang, Benjie knows that Ayala Westgrove Heights is the Next Big Thing. And as they begin to grow their family roots here, they know that the fruits of a wonderful future are simply within reach.

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Solving Mindanao's agriculture gridlock

By Ernesto M. Ordoñez

MARIA Holonio, president of Kasanyangan Mindanao Foundation Inc. (KFI), deserves to be heard. She has devoted his entire life to helping poor Mindanao farmers. For 15 years, he fought agribusiness corporations engaged in maize, banning small labor exploitation. For 15 years, he resolved on agrarian reform in Mindanao's plantations, opposing exploitative boardwalk agreements.

He mentioned how one palm oil corporation would only pay a farmer P3,000 to convert a hectare of the farmer's land. This amounts to only 5 percent of the land's foreign exchange production value.

Agribusiness strategy

In spite of Malacañang's firm hand supposes to sophisticate agribusiness practices, he says, "such unsustainable practices do not negate the value of a corporation's potential contribution to land and productivity and to centers of modernized farmers."

In his own words, agribusiness strategy is "applying modern and technology to farming and market solutions to agriculture."

This includes organizing and managing the supply chain from production (farm machinery, seeds, biotech, technology, credit), to post-harvest (dryers, silos, freight-forwarders, refrigerated vans), to manufacturer (flour and feed mills, sugar, fruits factories), to transport (ships, trucks, ports, the-like) and finally, marketing to deliver the goods to the customer.

Agribusiness strategy is the opposite of subsistence and marginal farming, prevalent in Philippine agriculture and the principal cause of poverty and hunger in Mindanao," Holonio said.

Mindanao statistics

A look at Mindanao agricultural statistics may bear this out. Rice, corn, and coconut lands in Mindanao total 4 million hectares, with an annual yield of P200,000 per hectare. At an average of 1.5 hectares per household, gross annual income amounts to P57,500. Assuming half of this goes to production costs, the net income comes to P28,750. This is far below the poverty line of P79,000 per household.

On the other hand, former plantations workers of the Davao Studfarm banana plantations who are now agrarian reform beneficiaries earn as much as P100,000 per hectare in net income. This does not include the additional wages they receive if they work on these plantations.

Gridlock

Mindanao cites gridlock in Mindanao agriculture today. On the one hand are the landowners of Mindanao's 4 million hectares, which is host 4 million unemployed or underemployed workers. On the other hand, there are the agribusiness investors with capital and knowledge but without the land or labor to put their money and human time to work.

Palm oil is an area where this gridlock can be broken. KFI envisions a local convergence development strategy that draws the various stakeholders together.

For palm oil, KFI proposes the following:

- The Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) has jurisdiction over 500,000 hectares in Mindanao which have been found suitable for palm oil production. The DAR can support at least the 150,000 hectares required to produce at least three palm oil refineries (currently import).
- The three palm oil mills owned by Filipinas Palm Oil Plantation Inc. (FPOI), Agusmill, and Guthrie are currently hungry as the growers-supplier base of a lack of fresh fruit bunches (FFB). These mills should undergo an aggressive program, which would broaden, rather than capture, small farmers to provide the needed production. An example is after Agusmill is doing under the leadership of C.K. Chang.
- The Department of Agriculture (DA), together with the DAR, should go beyond boardwalk agreements and promote joint venture arrangements. For example, the former experience of the former NDC-Guthrie plantations can become major model-builders of the conjunction, while the agribusiness partners can provide access to capital and technology for planning and management.

Nucleus Estate

- The managers of the 6,000 hectare plantation and oil mill in Agusan del Sur can turn this property into a nucleus estate that will aggressively promote smallholder development. This can be managed by a government subsidiary following the Federal Land Development Authority (Felda) and the Federal Land Consolidation and Rehabilitation Authority (Felcra) models of Malaysia, or the nucleus-outgrower system of Indonesia.
- The DA and DAR should promote the nucleus estate model in Indian-Kidapawan where the 34,000-hectare plantation owned by the farmers can be linked with the oil mill owned by farmers. This model can also be promoted in the Zamboanga peninsula and in Bacolod, where the oil mills or plantations have not been replanted and where there exist settlements such 100,000 hectares of underutilized lands.
- The DAR can likewise take over the failed project of Hacienda Biga in Lanao del Sur by issuing a CLOA where only the legitimate beneficiaries are included. This will ensure the continuation of the project which, as one case, was stopped because of the opposition of the legitimate beneficiaries who lost their lands.
- Finally, nongovernment organizations such as KFI can be harnessed as facilitators of this multi-party strategic negotiation process. They must jointly formulate the palm oil master development plan for Mindanao.

Conclusion

The Arroyo Agribusiness favors the priority given to coconut over palm oil in the reorganization of the Philippine Coconut Authority under Danilo Concepcion.

However, since the palm oil plan is an addition, rather than a substitute, to the coconut development plan, Mahomo's proposal should not jeopardize attention. This is especially important because of the recently announced government plan to develop 2 million hectares. I myself met with palm oil investors in Kuala Lumpur, who told me they are just awaiting for the proper arrangements to be made.

Maricar (his contact number is 09177168411) is advocating a socially responsible agribusiness strategy and land convergence approach for palm oil production. We hope to see his approach being applied in other agriculture sectors as well.

(The author is chair of Agrimatch, a private sector initiative; former undersecretary of agriculture and trade and industry; and former chair and Cabinet secretary for Presidential Flagship Programs and Projects. For inquiries or suggestions, e-mail agrimatch-phil@yahoo.com or telefax 02-4166.)

Fil-Hispano 'secrets'

COCKTALES

Victor C. Agustin

A "STRICTLY private and confidential" prospectus by SCBC Capital on Fil-Hispano's secondary offering has been passed, despite its supposedly hush-hush status, on the SCBC Intranet Web website.

Before anyone goes hyperventilating, the prospectus had really been uploaded in the website "to promote" awareness of the stock—this we got from SCBC Securities itself.

Unfortunately somebody just forgot to remove the private and confidential marking, an SCBC official admitted, apologetically.

Trading of Fil-Hispano is suspended until next week for the duration of the exercise, and cocktales will not repeat the analysis and recommendations, lest we get accused of pumping up the stock.

But what should perk up the interest of local investors is the little tidbit about the provenance of the new Fil-Hispano owners:

According to SB Capital, Fil-Hispano is now being "bankrolled by yesterday-rejected shareholders in the Osaka Yogyo Group of Mahendan Oswani Maneka Krishnan," apparently through the Hong Kong company that is making available an additional 19 percent of Fil-Hispano shares to the public.

Krishnan, for those who were born yesterday, just happens to be the richest man in Malaysia, best remembered for having built the Petronas Twin Towers in Kuala Lumpur.

In addition to the Hong Kong company, a number of minority shareholders were said to be selling off a portion of their shareholdings to raise Fil-Hispano's public float to 10.5 percent.

We will not be surprised if the local group is identified with Antolihao "Boodong" Floirendo Jr. of ABS Securities, the brains behind the lockdown listing.

ABS Securities was reported to have received from Fil-Hispano P24.3 million for investment banking and "value services," as well as the rights to an unidentified property to be expropriated by the government for a proposed road.

The moniker "Floirendo's mate, former Transportation and Communication Undersecretary Josefino T. Lichauco, has been looking for him. Hope this portion is really private and confidential.

Fil for Madrigals

BELGRANDE Madrigal, Oreppa and Tamoco families will receive the grand sum of P1 each in exchange for their respective stakes in the failed investment house Fast Asia (ASIA) Capital Corp., according to a debt-equity swap note being prepared by a creditors committee chaired by theater owner Ramon Mojera.

The Madrigals, the Oreppas and the Tamocos are said to have already given their go-ahead to the rehabilitation plan, which would transfer their by now largely shareholdings for a nominal amount to the unsecured creditors, who themselves will take a 47.5-percent discount on their claims.

According to the proposal, Hong Kong-based David Li of Bank of East Asia, who holds a 38 percent stake in the eponymous local investment house, has yet to give his approval, with the Mojera group unable to reach the 100 percent despite repeated attempts.

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas has given the Mojera group until Jan. 1 to secure the approvals and execute a series of transactions, including the dropping of lawsuits, aimed at severing ties the investment house's P1.75-billion liabilities.

After the hoton cleaning, the Mojera group plans to inject additional working capital to

(TURN TO PAGE B2)

Lorenzos to match bid for Del Monte

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

THE LORENZO family, the Philippine shareholder in Singapore-listed manufacturing firm Del Monte Pacific Ltd. (DMPL), is keen on matching the best bid for the 60-percent stake held by Italian food maker Citra Finanziaria S.p.A.

The Lorenzos, the second biggest shareholder of DMPL with a 25 percent stake, have the option to match the best bid for Citra's shares, which will be bid out this month.

We are looking to buy the stake of the Italians. If the price is good enough, we will match it the best bid," DMPL managing director Rhoel Antonio told reporters after a Management Association of the Philippines (MAP) forum at the Makati Shangri-La yesterday.

DMPL's total outstanding capital stock stands at 1.074 billion shares. Sixty percent would represent roughly 636 million shares.

Antonio said that as of Nov. 10, the 40-percent Citra stake was worth roughly $175 million at market prices.

Lorenzo said that should he finally succeed in raising its stake to DMPL to 65 percent, they would keep their partners in Singapore.

"DMPL remains to be a big deal for us now. We love Del Monte. I think we are on the right track. We will be you, we will be mine, we will be millions. Every time the currency changes, it works for us," Lorenzo said.

San Miguel Corp. (SMC), the country's largest food and beverage firm, is bidding for Citra's 40-percent interest along with Sumitomo Corp. of Japan and American companies J.G. Home Co. and Fresh Del Monte Produce Inc., the company that markets the group's products worldwide. Final offers are expected by the end of November.

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LUCERNE

Stocks down 0.79% on ratings woes

SHARE prices closed 0.79 percent lower yesterday, extending losses on continuing concerns the country faces a potentially costly sovereign downgrade, dealers said.

Moody's Investors Service said Tuesday it was placing the Philippines under review for possible downgrade owing to concerns over the deterioration in the government's fiscal and debt position.

The Philippine Stock Exchange composite index shed 14.89 points to 1,710.69, having traded between 1,703.23 and 1,779.18.

The broader all-shares index was down 8.81 points at 1,143.04.

Losers beat gainers 88 to 33, with 32 stocks unchanged.

Turnover was 589.7 million shares worth P7.25 billion after 1.51 billion shares worth P825.59 million pass on Wednesday.

"The market is still in a bad mood because of the Moody's warning. Investors would rather stay on the sidelines and just wait for the Moody's verdict," said Nestor Aguila of UM Market Securities.

The key index fell below the support level of 1,770 and dealers believe this means the market may be bound for a deeper correction.

Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. was down 50¢ to P1,225.

Globe Telecom closed 0.5% lower at P985. A block sale of Globe Telecom shares worth 96.65 billion boosted yesterday's turnover after the Ayala group sold a 5-percent stake in the company to Singapore Telecommunications.

Bank of the Philippine Islands fell by P1 to P46 and Digital Telecommunications dropped four centavos to P1.40. AFP

Disclosures

Semirara Mining Corp. declared a 25 percent stock dividend worth P525 million to be taken from its increase in authorized capital stock from P700 million to P1 billion.

* * *

Fortune Cement Corp. denied having any information to explain the 18 percent increase in its share price that rose from P0.49 to P0.57 each.

* * *

Filinvest Development Corp. (FDC) and Trans-X Holdings Corp. executed a Deed of Absolute Sale of Shares for the latter's 17.2 million shares in Hacienda Philippinas Property Holding Inc. Trans-X paid FDC P1.82 million, which is 80 percent of the total purchase price.

* * *

Nelux Corporation Inc. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on Dec. 27, 10 a.m. at the 3rd floor of the DB 349 of Citibank Tower, Makati City. Stockholders of record as of Nov. 22 will be entitled to vote at the meeting. *Compiled by Marcial D. Tolosa, PDI Research*

Cocktales

From page B1

bring up the capital account to a Bangko Sentral minimum of P300 million.

Heard through the grapevine

THE SEQUOIA 8 reunion (alternative at the Manila Yacht Clubhouse has apparently garnered its way up to the management mind as well.

The club management has just signified its two-time commodore, former Ambassador to Italy Jose Zaldarriaga, all because the latter has been critical of certain club policies.

(Email: cocktales_pdi@yahoo.com or cocktales_pdi@hotmail.com)

Palay price hike sought

By Christine A. Gaphiao

THE DEPARTMENT of Agriculture is proposing a P1-per-kilo increase in the government's buying price for palay during the main cropping season to help raise the income of some three million farmers in the country.

The measure, which will be proposed to the National Food Authority Council in a meeting today, is expected to increase the income of the farmers by 16 to 46 percent based on current production costs, said Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap.

The increase will bring the support price for palay harvested during the main cropping season to P15 a kilo, or the same as the buying price for the summer crop, Yap said.

The main or wet season crop, which is harvested in the fourth quarter, accounts for around 80 percent of the country's palay output.

Palay farmers had sought the support price hike in view of the increases in farm production costs. The NFA said that from P7 per kilo, the cost of producing palay now had increased to a range of P7.00 to P7.40 per kilo due to the rising prices of fertilizers.

Since 2001, the Department of Agriculture has been promoting the use of high-yielding hybrid and certified seeds, which promise higher yields of four to nine tons per hectare. The yield per hectare of farms using ordinary seeds was placed at only 1.5 to two tons.

However, an NFA official said an increase in the government's support price for palay might prove disadvantageous to local farmers given the government's tight fiscal situation.

Ecozone investments surged 60% in first 10 months

A SLEW of expansion moves among economic zone locators led to a 60-percent jump in approved investments in the first 10 months, to P26.6 billion from P22.3 billion in the same period last year.

Data from the Philippine Economic Zone Authority show that the total amount of committed investments from January to October this year has surpassed the P18.4 billion recorded in the whole of 2003.

Peza reported that in October, alone, approved projects reached P6.15 billion with estimated export sales of $865 million or about P23.7 billion a year. Most of these projects would cater to the US market.

Investments given the go-ahead last month included 14 expansion projects costing an average of P222.6 million. These projects are expected to generate export receipts averaging $19 million or about P1 billion a year.

Three projects include the expansion of 13 export manufacturing ventures, amounting to P179 million to P668.8 million. These other investments are expansion of existing information technology-based projects worth between P260 million and P700 million.

Proponents of most of the projects opted not to give details of their projects, except for Hyundai Philippines Inc. The South Korean firm applied for registration of a new project worth 39,013 million.

Hyundai would put up in the Carmelray Industrial Park II ecozone a manufacturing facility for high-technology modules and actuators for mobile phone equipment.

The firm sees revenues to reach an average of $15.5 million from sales to the Korean, Japanese, Chinese and European markets.

In terms of projected sales, the biggest since include 888 Tech Philippines Inc.'s factory for watches and wooden photo frames.

The new project at the Cavite Economic Zone expects to post $53 million in sales a year.

Satellite big carrier in Manila Trading Philippines Tomorrow Corp.'s warehousing and logistics services project.

Among the multichannel projects, the P688.6-million investment of Sun Cellular is the largest at $320.5 million a year while the P481.9-million project has $46.3-million.

Also, Peza said it realized investments approved in the first 10 months were up 81 percent to P6.15 billion from P3.39 billion in the same period in 2003.

IT investments account for 17 percent of all income projects.

BOI sends investment mission to Europe

THE BOARD of Investments has sent a mission to Europe to drum up interest in the country as a destination for bank office operations and business process outsourcing, as well as possible joint ventures with local firms.

Trade Secretary Cesar V. Purisima, who is heading the mission, said in a statement that the mission was optimistic the trip would result in significant business deals similar to what was achieved in previous missions to China and Taiwan.

Purisima earlier said official visits to the Chinese and Taiwanese capitals resulted in the signing of deals worth $1 billion and $46 million, respectively.

The 11-day European mission kicked off last Monday in Switzerland. The delegation, which includes a team from 13 private companies, will proceed to The Netherlands, United Kingdom, Sweden and Norway.

In Switzerland, Peninsular Intl officials in meetings with executives of UBS, Nestlé, Alcon Group, Swiss International Air Lines, Swissmo, Swiss Re and Credit Suisse.

"We are seeking help from the Swiss-Southeast Asian Chamber of Commerce in organizing an investment mission to bring Swiss businessmen to the country next year," the official said.

The Philippine group was scheduled to visit the port city of Rotterdam Wednesday to encourage Royal Philips Electronics to consider using the country as a possible location of a shared services facility for its semiconductor operations in Asia.

Purisima said the group would also promote the country as an alternative site for Philips's operations in India and Thailand.

"We will also ask the help of the Union for Promotions of Imports from Developing Countries in arranging a Dutch investment mission to the Philippines aside from a possible evening program for Philippine companies," he added.

The Rotterdam leg would also provide opportunity to inform members to study the port operations of Northern Europe's logistics.

Business officials who went with the BOI team included those from Philips Philippines, ING Philippines, Inmet Construction, Volvopoint, Filipinas Shell Group, MGI Gulf, The Environment Collaborative, ITH International, Diversified Technology Systems, Hexdevsoft Philippines and Outlaw Developers.

Ronnel W. Domingo

BOC tier 2 issue gets 'A' rating

PHILIPPINE Racing Services Corp. (Philracom), an affiliate of Waterfront and Pera's in the country, gave Bank of Commerce an 'A' rating for its proposed tier 2 capital. The rating means that this issue has favorable investment attributes.

Bank of Commerce's proposed tier 2, or unsecured subordinated notes of P1.2 billion, will be issued in the first quarter of 2005. It has a term of 10 years with a call option after year five.

Philrating gave this rating to consideration of the bank's business franchise, its stable lending profile and the availability of capitalization support from its shareholders.

Philrating further stated that the bank management has expressed commendable insights on its strengths and weaknesses and is clear on its direction for achieving targeted growth. One of these is the heightened targeting of emerging and new clients and the bank personnel's increased focus on marketing.

Bank of Commerce is the first bank to rock a domestic credit rating for its proposed issue.

BSP may raise key rates next year on Fed move

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BANGKO Sentral ng Pilipinas said it may need to increase rates if the US Federal Reserve raises its key interest rates to 4 percent next year.

In a press briefing after the weekly Monetary Board meeting yesterday, BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura said he expects the movement in the US Fed rates next year by 2 percentage points to be "increased increases."

"Definitely at 2 percent, we'll respond or we'll have responded already," Buenaventura said.

The US Fed yesterday raised its benchmark short-term interest rate by another 25 basis points to 2 percent, on the back of more favorable economic and job market conditions.

The move puts the US rates at their highest level since the end of the last recession in 2001, when the rate was slashed to a 45-year low of one percent.

Buenaventura said the latest hike was surprised by the BSP during its last policy rate setting, when the policy-making Monetary Board maintained the overnight borrowing rate at 6.75 percent.

Buenaventura said oil prices would have a bigger impact on local consumer prices than the interest rate differential with the US.

"We still believe that inflation will taper off in 2006 as the bulk of the current pressures are transitory," Buenaventura said.

"What we haven't factored in is that if we're successful on all the revenue measures sought by the government, that will increase economic activity and then there will be a rise in demand pressures," Buenaventura said.

In his, he said there was no need to tighten the rates in view of moderate demand and it was the supply side causing inflationary pressures.

"As much as possible we'd like to keep interest rates low," Buenaventura said.

In such, he hinted there would be no change in the country's monetary setting during the MB's rate policy rate meeting next week.

The increase in the US Fed rate occurred as the economy of America recovered in line back in the US.

The MDR, in its latest economic outlook released yesterday, projected that the Fed would continue to raise its policy rate at a "measured" pace over the 2004-2005 period. By end-2005, it expects the rate to hit 3.5-4 percent.

AmCham hails power rate cut

By Abigail L. Ho

THE PARTIAL removal of inter-class subsidies for customers of the Manila Electric Co. would help boost investment in the manufacturing and industrial sectors, the American Chamber of Commerce said.

The AmCham said in a statement that the ruling of the Energy Regulatory Commission to remove 40 percent of inter-class cross subsidies would help make industrial and commercial firms more competitive.

The partial removal of inter-class cross-subsidies for Meralco customers effectively brought down rates for big electricity users.

The initial 40-percent inter-class cross subsidy removal will result in monthly savings of 27.85 centavos per kilowatt-hour (kWh) for large non-industrial service/commercial users and of 20.22 centavos per kWh for extra large industrial service customers starting this month.

Medium non-industrial service commercial customers will enjoy a rate reduction of 10.12 centavos per kWh, small non-industrial service users a rate decline of 12.66 centavos per kWh, large industrial service consumers a monthly savings of 10.95 centavos per kWh and medium industrial service users a rate markdown of 3.37 centavos per kWh.

Nokia launches new models

By Clarissa S. Balino

NOKIA Phils. Inc. plans to maintain its status as the leading handset maker by going after subscribers who frequently upgrade their phones.

Nokia country manager Rudhdi Shamsuddin said in a briefing that the Philippines remained a huge market for handset makers even if mobile phone users make up almost 35 percent of the population.

Nokia, thus, aims to keep its command 60 percent share of the market by offering new phone models and topping the 8 and 3 families.

"In the Philippines, our objective is to encourage subscribers to upgrade their phones and we have made available a source of handsets that should cater to all types of users," said Shamsuddin.

He said Nokia would launch 14 new handsets by the coming year.

About two-thirds of the new devices would have cameras and more than half would come in clamshell and slide models.

Nokia has so far launched more than 10 new models in the market, the most recent of which was the new Nokia Communicator or the 9500.

Two more would be made available in the market by the end of the month—the 7600 and 7600.

Expect . . .

From page B1

record time and fuel requirements, and consequently cut the cost of delivering customer products.

Earlier, Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp. and Caltex Philippines Inc. raised the prices of their LPG by P50.0 for every 11-kilogram cylinder. This means Shellmo can now be bought at between P433.00 and P435.50, compared with the previous P380 to P394.20. Caltex's LPG can now be purchased at between P405.00 and P436.00, compared with the previous P375 to P430.

For their part, water concessionaires Manila Water Services Inc. and Manila Water Co. will raise their rates by 30 and 21 percent, respectively, starting January next year. They said the rate increase was necessary to recover their losses, partly caused by the fall of the peso.

Also, President Macapagal-Arroyo has agreed to allow oil companies to increase their prices for the last time this year. The Department of Energy said oil players have requested for a P2.0 rise per liter in the pump of diesel and P1.0 for gasoline.

But the DOE is urging oil companies to adopt a cause-subsidy scheme, under which they will increase price of gasoline by P1 and of diesel by P1 to lessen the impact on the cost of public transportation.

INQBOX
Question of the Week
We are losing scores of Filipino nurses and doctors to foreign countries. What do you think should be done to remedy this problem?
Senders of a text ID, both published in Tuesday's InqBox will each receive an "Inquirer T-shirt!"
Key in: inquirer news mobile/city message.
Text your answers to 2287 (Globe) or 320 (Smart).
Please include name, cell no. (Globe or Smart), address, age and occupation in the following order:
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Mon. thru Inquirer's Opinion

Economists expect agriculture sector to grow by 5% in third quarter

THE COUNTRY'S agriculture sector in the third quarter is expected to perform no better than the previous quarter, with the growth rate predicted to be any where between 4.5 to 5 percent, economists pointed out.

In spite of fiscal problems and the high cost of fertilizers, the agriculture sector still managed to sustain a moderate growth, as rice, sugar and corn posted record production outputs during the period, the economists said.

In the second quarter, the sector posted a 5 percent growth.

"Hopefully, [the agriculture sector] would become fresh in the last quarters," said Dr. Rolando Dy of the University of Asia and the Pacific.

But according to University of the Philippines economist Dr Ernesto Pernia, the sector's recorded 4 to 5 percent growth could put down the entire domestic output.

Agriculture's performance is closely being watched by the country's economists since the sector makes up almost a fifth of the country's total economic output.

The Department of Agriculture will issue the third quarter report next week.

Dhrubber A. Gaylican

LIFESTYLE Beauty

For feedback, e-mail us at lifestyle@inquirer.com.ph
Text us your feedback: inquirer life <space> message to 2207 (Globe) or 282 (Smart)

L'OREAL hair colors

It's time to give credit to the products that help me maintain my locks in tiptop shape

No more bad-hair days

EITHER a group of friends conspired to e-mail me the same concern, or it was a major sign. Seven people wrote me in a span of two days begging for an article on hair products.

Well, I thought about it and realized that the last time I had a haircut was June of this year. But I've hardly had a bad-hair day since, so it's time to give credit to the products that help me maintain my locks in tiptop shape.

MY hair savers

Kinny Salas

Short-hair styling aids

LOreal Studio's Freeze and Out of Bed have been road-tested by my male friends who refuse to spend a fortune on hair products, much more walk into a salon to purchase them. They have since repurchased a tube of Freeze and a tub of Out of Bed to manipulate their hairstyles.

Those who want the standing-hair artist look prefer Out of Bed, and those who are more conservative who just want to keep their hair in place choose Freeze.

The great news is, the cost is definitely under P500 (ranging from P380-P490) and the products are widely available in groceries and drugstores.

For frizz control and greater shine, the best treatments are The Body Shop's Grapeseed serum, LOreal Professional's Liss Extreme Reflexium shine perfecting leave-in-serum and Phytoliss ultra shine.

For hair with fly-away, damaged ends, try Kerastase Lait Nutri-sculpt, which is great for dry and sensitized hair. Tigi Bed Head's Split Ends Mender and Body Shop's Bilberry Leave-In Detangler both smell great and leave hair looking healthy and fabulous.

Now, when it comes to a shampoo-cum-conditioner that makes hair look and smell great, you won't go wrong with Tigi Bed Head's Control Freak S&C, especially if you have coarse, frizzy hair. It leaves hair smelling like sweet buttery pineapples.

To add shine to lackluster hair, get hold of TRS Olive S&C. To volumize fine and limp hair, on the other hand, LOccitane Aromicia shampoo and conditioner (applied to ends only) and Lush Big shampoo and Retread conditioner are the best bets. Get

GO MORE, C2

SOFT Shampoo

HARD Shampoo

Know your water to choose the right shampoo

LUSH, creator of fresh handmade cosmetics, has crafted products to help little beauty tricks achieve the best effects.

To best care for your hair, it is important to know your water as it has the most impact on the shampoo you use and its effects. Lush has the right products for the kind of water you use.

In hard-water areas, you use more of a product to try to get a good lather; in soft-water areas, it is difficult to wash out all the shampoo as conditioner.

Lush has two exclusive shampoo variants: one for hard water (P395 for 100g), the other for soft-water areas (P320 for 100g).

Lush also has a solid moisturizer for all skins.

Ring of Skin (P295), pictured parading, is a solid skin moisturizer. It is rich in emollient cocoa, shea and coconut butters, and has blends of nourishing almond, avocado and jojoba oil as well as oatmeal infusion, for plumped up, soft and shimmering skin. The bar can be used in the shower for a light moisturizing effect.

Lush, exclusively distributed by Stores Specialists, Inc., has boutiques at Glorietta 4, Power Plant Mall, Shangri-La Mall and Greenbelt 3. Visit www.lush.com.ph.

KING of Skin Solid Moisture Bar

Sweet-smelling promo

GET a free umbrella for a minimum purchase of Montblanc fragrances. Offer good while supply lasts.

THIS umbrella is yours for a minimum purchase of Montblanc fragrances.

Montblanc fragrances include Presence, designed to evoke a man's inspiring aura and strength of character. Presence d'une Femme that, with top international model Helena Christensen as endorser, seemed to exude radiance.

The Presence pair opens with a crisp freshness made intense by an Oriental heart and enhanced by sensual base notes.

A third product in the line, Presence Cool, is lighter and fresher than the original.

Individuel, as the name implies, is meant to express extroversity and distinction. It is a fresh, soft Oriental fragrance that is meant to be as unique as the man who wears it.

Montblanc fragrances are available in leading department stores nationwide. They are exclusively distributed by Bunzai's Marketing Corporation.

No more bad-hair days

ready for this Amberian-to-go weekend?

Glowing greasy hair without overstepping is what Dr.Groom Aromatechnologie Mint Shampoo does best. Also, severely damaged hair gets a second chance with Dr.Groom Angelica shampoo and conditioner. For sensitive, allergy-prone scalps, try Kerma Oligo Rica protein and Shea shampoo, or even YMY Milk shampoo for hair and body.

There's a hair spray that holds strands in place big time: Hiroad Studio-ending spray Ultra-Ha.

Hair color at home

Lately, in our rants, I have taken to coloring my own hair at home, but with surprisingly professional results. For highlights, nothing beats Clairol Frost. I like the cool like Caribbean and Ruby Fusion and golden bronze shades like Crystal Brown, Creme Brulee and Sparkling Sienna.

For a more permanent look, I pick the lighter line in darker colors, so my hair roots don't look so obvious when they peek out. I choose Dark Violet Brown and Medium Golden Brown. (I want a particular color to match a dress or costume, I use Cardigo, which does so off scrupulously and gradually fades in six weeks' time.

Moisturizers for men

Men are lazy when it comes to skincare beyond soap and water. But unless they are often greasy or allergic to cosmetics, they need to moisturize as well to hydrate their skin. After all, even skin is always an asset, and adds lots of "pogi" points.

Crabtree and Evelyn's Ocean skincare 24-hour emulsion and LuxeEnsci 24-hour moisturizer for men suit the lazies of husbands and boyfriends. Apply it in the morning, and skin stays silky and hydrated the whole day. All you have to do is wash your face, shave and slap that on, and voila—a fresh-looking you!

E-mail the author at 4stepsalon@yahoo.com

CRABTREE & Evelyn Ocean Skincare 24-Hour Emulsion

Bumble & Bumble

Beauty bar-hopping with an expert

By Kitty Go
Contributor

WHILE researching another story on makeup, I asked Filipino makeup artist Yuan Ing (he does Gong Li's makeup) if powdering lips was a good way to keep lipstick long-lasting. He warned his blushing bride-to-be against it, and laughed at me, saying lipstick formulas these days are pretty long-wearing. Meanwhile, his advice on the best foundation application area to use a spray machine costing hundreds of dollars but was "really overkill."

I must have seriously lost touch with the beauty routine because I stared at him blankly with dumpy mascara-ed eyes. With the most glamorous event in my social calendar being a trip to Ocho Uno, I knew it was time to update myself (and others) on beauty developments.

I decided to hunt such data (beth_jones2000@yahoo.com, 09173860738), Preview magazine's makeup artist of choice, at Beauty Bar (www.beautybar.com.ph), a product playground of sorts for cosmetic aficionados.

For over an hour we discussed nose hairs, tips and tipsoil, probiotic facials and her clients' hues encountered, including the mysterious fact that waterproof mascara keeps lashes curled longer than non-waterproof ones which cause lashes to collapse not long after they are curled.

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Beauty basket

"Anyone above the importance of daily use of sunscreen, and Rice Mi Face is perfect as it's not only enough to wear under makeup," says Bumble Bumble's Rose complexion spray cools overheated faces, while Skin Alliance Radiance Inner Glow cheek color duo (just that—give you a glow. Mix makeup kit must be without a top quality loose powder such as Young Blood Mineral powder, which is a loose, powder and concealer in one. "What people don't need is a concealer, just loose powder applied with a sponge for good coverage. A little goes a long way," advises Burki. She also recommends that people with acnic skin go one shade lighter.

Sue Devitt green eye shadow

Bobbi Brown's current best-selling eyeshadow is plum, but green such as Wet 'n Meadow from Sue Devitt is highly recommended for shades because it has brown undertones.

Big Blow Off

"The first and most frequent question on our website is on hair," reports Mina Montalbano, marketing manager of Beauty Bar. "Filipinas crave flat hair; that's why rebounding is popular." Burki recommends Philosophy's The Big Blow Off before blow-drying for flat, fuss-with Pollyne locks.

Palladio Rice Powder

These papers and their traditional powder in kabuki blocks are the best solutions to fixing makeup and controlling oily skin.

Pout Up gloss

"I never need moisturizer when I use this. Plus, it tastes good!" is Burki's comment.

Frizz Free

Women with thick wiry strands will appreciate this shampoo and conditioner. For best results, use before Big Blow Out by Philosophy.

Smashbox cream eye shadow

Cream eye shadow creases in humidity but is denser for older people with dry skin. "Just an eye shadow stationer if you are over 55, " says Burki, "because it will emphasize lines."

Smashbox Artificial Light

No one, except Dracula, has ever died from too much light, and that goes for the people between 45 and death—a little shimmer on the cheeks has diverse benefits. Smashbox Jojoba recommended for use in film and television, is one makeup line that handles pros perfectly for near-disaster-up.

Skin Allison Raffaele True Concealer

"This is light in texture and hours in pigment so a little goes a long way. It's great as an eye makeup base but people with dry skin have to dab sparingly as cream before concealer so it spreads better and doesn't cake," says Burki.

In full bloom

NO need to wait till spring or summer to spread some sensitive and chaos. Go ahead and combine different hues that are fun and flirty. Tip: Simply tie an inexpensive but stylish-looking jip cap/cardi/blazer around your waist for a feminine finishing touch. Cotton candy-pink knit top, Php97.75; sky-blue cardigan, P795.75; lemon yellow shell with corsage, P375; floral skirt, P795; floral-tiered skirt, P795

Color me pretty

Vibrant colors are a wonderful way to brighten your disposition, add humor and bring cheer to any occasion

MOST people build their wardrobe based on neutral colors like black, khaki, gray or white. Such basics are safe and practical, easy to combine easy to mix and match and update with more vivid accent pieces.

But on the flip side, neutral palettes can also be boring. To break away from the tendency to don basic hues day in and day out, update your wardrobe and shatter of dressing by wearing rainbow-colored pieces that are fun and feminine.

So as not to overwhelm your senses, choose a bright sherbet top such as a lemon-yellow knit to match with neutral bottoms. Or if you're in need of change and a little excitement, edgy can go wild by combining a frenzy of colors! A sky blue cardigan and a baby pink shell, for instance, will look pretty with a floral printed circle skirt.

Vibrant, tally Pulitzer-like colors are a wonderful way to brighten your disposition, add humor and bring cheer to any occasion or occasions.

Color, after all, is a way of communication and adorning your moods. So, go ahead, take this as a challenge to do a bit of alchemy by combining different hues to create a dazzling new you.

E-mail the author at apeabres@hotmail.com

APPLES' PICKINGS

Apples Aberes-Sudhwani

Wardrobe maker-upper

A COLORED item or accessory is all you need to make up your wardrobe. A shrill one or a multicolored weekend tote should do the trick. Multicolored tote, P549; suede flatsil pink and blue plastic totes, P795 each

'80s redux

RELIVE the '80s by combining bright preppy colors that were popular during that era. Think "Valley Girls" or "Pretty in Pink" minus the big shoulder pads and poofball pumps. Candy-pink cardigan, P795.75; white tank top, P375; apple-green mini skirt, P695.75

A touch of whimsy

If you're not daring enough to wear a frenzy of colors, add a bit of excitement to your wardrobe by combining vibrant pieces with neutrals. Apple-green halter top, P695.75; black tiered skirt, P695

She works out regularly and goes down dancing to stay in shape.

Priscilla, queen of Earth

Text by Alex Y. Vergara
Photos by Chito Vesina

HER name may remind you of that has-been bold star, but Priscilla "Pri" de Almeida Meneelles is certainly no bimbo. Never mind if the winsome 23-year-old has already joined and won in almost a dozen beauty contests, the biggest of which is Miss Earth.

This Brazilian beauty has a thousand-and-one plans when the jamboree for her crown next year and close to a score of them.

"People have been asking me (that since I came," she says in near eloquence, when asked if she's willing to give local show biz a try. "I wonder why."

Well, it's not every day Filipinos are treated to the sight of a tall and tan and, well, young and lovely Latina. That she's endemic and hardly one outcast and girlish with a ready smile the new makes her all the more desirable. And the best part is she looks better in person (especially in a swimsuit!) than in pictures.

Future doctor

But no thanks, as Pri plans to remain for studies since she returns to her native Amazonas, a huge province in the Amazon forest north of Brazil. She wants to be a doctor.

Before Miss Earth, she won Queen of the Sea in Colombia and Miss Globe in Turkey. She almost made it to the Miss Universe pageant last year, landing fourth runner-up in the final round.

But Miss Earth will be Pri's main song, as she promised to leave the beauty pageant circuit for good to focus on her studies.

"I want to promote energy sangy... energy," she says in her limited English. "I can never pronounce it right."

She may not be that fluent in Shakespeare's language, but she certainly speaks it better than the average Filipino. To think the Portuguese-speaking Pri started learning English and Spanish fairly recently.

"I hardly have any free time," she sighs. "I spent most of my time studying, in the mornings and working out and going to English and Spanish classes at night."

Brazilians may be crazy about football, she adds, but they hardly care about beauty contests. Even the prestigious Miss Universe, which is honored now as beauty pageants crazy Colombia and Venezuela, hardly rates in Brazil. In fact, she says, there were a number of years when the show wasn't aired live.

Indeed, why outlaw several hours of primetime TV when you can have a better view of more daring women in barely-there costumes at the Rio de Janeiro carnival. And if the average woman looks like Pri, then beauty contests have indeed become superfluous.

"She's a long story," says Pri, "nobody paid attention to beauty pageants. It started to change again because the girls are doing a good job."

THE BEAUTY from Manaus in Amazonas province (plus clothes) with the Bayanan hut

Big welcome

If her mother's experience upon returning home is any indication, Pri is in for a big welcome. She accompanied Pri to the Philippines during the earlier part of the pageant, but had to go ahead soon after her daughter was crowned.

"They are very happy," she beams, referring to her compatriots in Manaus. "When my mother came back, everybody recognized her. They had a party and took pictures of my mom and my special awards."

But Pri kept her crown and sash with her, as she'll be wearing them on a beauty queen's welcome upon her much-awaited homecoming. The last thing she heard, a fire truck has already been outfitted to carry her on a motorcade all over the city.

Of all the sights in the Philippines, she cites Baguio as her favorite. Besides, like Boracay, now a closer to dozen in her part of Brazil, but the view of mountains is something else.

She has nothing but praises for Filipinos. But believe it or not, as Filipino men have had the chance to date her so far.

Not that Pinays are starting to become slow when it comes to women every ambitious, as Pri rules has a "problem." She has a boyfriend waiting for her back home.

"He's studying marketing and to take a degree," she says obviously. "He didn't come here to watch the show because he's working, but he's proud and happy and everything."

He understands my career."

Not only does she have outstanding homework her own, this pretty woman is also loyal. This year's Miss Earth is a prize catch, indeed.

E-mail the author at ...@inquirer.com.ph

THIS year's poster girl for the environment wants people of the consequences of ... waste management and destruction.

#34029 If she loves to shop, Pri makes her head and rolls her hands a bit. She claims to know the meaning of money

TISHA Bautista with Tony Portillo, Hanner Polidoro, Baby Cruz and Edda Vizcarra

BOEY Cruz with Baby Quiza and Norieg Abbas

ARCHIE Bustamante, Francis Juico and Willy de Guzman

DUCK Romualdez and Ismg Vazquez

ARMELING Puso with Rudy Lagdameo

TITO Lagdameo and Carlos Bautista

POPOY Juico and lawyer Andy Bautista

Ivana Trump and some spice

I'VE always loved to sit back and people-watch, but it is an outdoor café in Paris, on the slopes of the New York Museum, or on the beach of Acapulco and not the usual, palengges, I wouldn't say no to an invite to the ivy enclosure Tower Club on Ayala Avenue, for a party in honor of super icon businesswoman Alice Gaborro. The affair was organized by beautiful by his sister, that luscious beauty of Jewelmer, beautiful Baby O. Cruz, in her.

The party was attended by Alice's pals, but I particularly enjoyed spending his mates from De La Salle batch of 1960. Sa sentimento, ako pa rin and were the majority sources he had met during the time he spent at the Standard Union and his family. The Bacani is the of the Club, with its fab panoramic view of Makati and he (you) was packed.

Unaware of what was about to hit him, Alec walked into the club, thinking it was going to be a quiet dinner with some close pals. Walking in with his trademark smile, he was greeted with whistles, applause and shouts of "surprise" from the crowd. The expression on his face was absolutely priceless, palengges.

After all the hugs and shaking hands, we framed on a delectable mahual yummy buffet especially prepared by Baby Cruz. Then Madame Imelda Marcos treated the crowd to her famous rendition of "Ikaw" and "Feelings."

WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH

Hanner
Article Art
Photos by
Alex Siao Hagoon
an Kachek Mizo

CELEBRITY crowds: Marcos, the hostess Alice Gaborro, Ella Jurio, jokesting Cielito Reyes, Daniel Vazquez, Irmg Vazquez and Helen Dee

which happens to be Alec's favorite.

Melodrie bah, then! "It's so nice to have you back where you belong," as the song goes, palengges.

FCCP turns 35

These women who are continually crafty will did it again, palengges. The talking of the Friends for Cultural Concerns of the Philippines who got all dolled up for their grand silver anniversary at the Manila Polo Club.

Petite southern gal Cez Maga Hontoria came up with a five-star-rating program, dahlings.

With all those high-brow music. It was time for a breather for the FCCP a 30-minute video presentation showed us their accomplishments.

"It was moving to see the outreach projects undertaken in the city and the provinces, like the Artists and Friends program, the pre Christ

to page 12

BOY Elizar with Elsie Roman

JoCjog Ramos, Jacks Fernandez and Gimp Boy Perez de Tagle

The Good News

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

SUPER PALS. Ja-Lian's president, eye-catching beauty Jackee Salgado, and brilliant interior designer Jaclyn Adduru

cGUARDS Mavricia and Jeanlka Bonnevie

WOMEN BEHIND THE FORCE. Chloe Romulo Perlquet, Tessie Lee, Mari Organista, Chico Madrigal Collantes, Lotty Syquia, Olga Severino, Coi Morato, Trishia Gana and Mollie Abaya

THEY CARE. Brilliant writer Chitong Nakpil with Pitoy Moreno, Nelle Lacson Elizalde and Nene Lozano

CHARITY CAHUNTED socialites May Wan, Melissa Fuentes and TeiLAyson

WINE. Gui Regino, Princess Monjiro, Dixie and Lorry Jamsen

TOP plastic surgeon Dr. George Hori with Ambassador Christine Tengco of Belgium

Ivana . . .

From page C6

nian bazaar and the annual ball," explained the civic-minded Nene Lozano.

When Chito Madrigal-Collantes, the PCCI founding share and first president, walked in, she got a standing ovation.

"Her affair was all about giving, about helping others.

A businessman was complaining about his wife's excessive drinking. "I think she drinks to forget she drinks," he said. "In fact, there are times she drinks so much alcohol, that I'm afraid to let her smoke."

Well, pobrygga, I think it's time she join A.A.

Spotting them

Another is gent, Eduardo "Bonz" Lacson, a top private Luxembourg-based banker who jets all over the world, was one of the guests of honor at a chi-chi dinner party thrown by renowned French personality, Xavier Antoux, at the latter's open-to-the-sky villa in St. Tropez. Antoux is the son of the '60s pop icon Michael Antoux.

Another honoree at the dinner was Ivana Trump, ex-wife of Donald T. Ivana was said to have delighted the guests with her stories and comments, adding spice to the already hot party.

Asked why she falls in love with younger men, she answered, "Hahhaa, 'D' so much rather be a babysitter than a nurse."

Yes, she is presently involved with a gorgeous Italian who is in his late 20s.

Nevertheless, I asked the usually unflappable Ivana for more details about the party and he obliged with another of Ivana's super candid statements: "While we were discussing about yachts and private jets (which St. Tropez and Côte de Azur are famous for) Ivana said, 'Well, if it flies, floats and f—s, rent it, darlings!'"

Insane, girl, de rane. No wonder she got a fortune when she divorced Donald Trump, di ba?

Nene has just returned back to town for a couple of days to observe the building of his super monster house in Boracay. He is also one of the several hostess of Gisela Hechon and Gacha Teagno, who will both celebrate their birthdays on the island, pobrygga.

Christmas bazaar

It's bazaar time again, pobrygga!

And what better day to go shopping than on Nov. 14, when all trade will head to the ballroom of the Hotel InterContinental.

From 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., you will experience a different kind of shopping. It's shopping for a super good cause.

Why? Because funds generated from the bazaar will be used to support numerous civic projects for the entire year.

The Christmas bazaar will fund in particular mobility needs assistance, including Project TB Eradication, the Save-An-Eye project, and several other projects. Still, more proclamos.

Check it out, pobrygga.

NOTE. Carlo-resident Mona Lacson flanked by French actor Damien Maffei and international socialite Ivana Trump